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Genesis

Chapter 1

How God Created the Universe and Everything in It

¹{This is how everything} began: God created the heavens and the earth. ²{At first after that,} the earth did not have {its present} form, and there was nothing {living} on it. It was {totally} dark, there was deep water {everywhere}, and God's Spirit was moving above the water. ³Then God said, "I command light to start shining!" And {immediately} light started shining. ⁴God observed that the light {was} excellent. Then he divided the light from the darkness {so that each had its own time}. ⁵He named the light Daytime, and the darkness he named Nighttime. Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the first day.

⁶Then God said, "I command there to be a large space in the middle of the water, so that it divides the water into two separate places." ⁷That is how God made a large space and used it to divide the water that {was} below the space from the water that {was} above it. Everything happened {exactly} as he commanded, ⁸and he named the space Sky. Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the second day.

⁹Then God said, "I command the water {that is} below the sky to come together in one place so that there is dry ground." And that is {exactly} what happened. ¹⁰Then God named the ground that had dried off Land, and he named the water which had gathered together Ocean. And he observed that {what he had made was} excellent.

¹¹Then God said, "I command the land to produce {green} plants all over the earth, {including} {all types of} plants that produce seeds {and} {all types of} fruit trees that produce their own type of fruit with seeds inside." And that is {exactly} what happened. ¹²The land started producing {green} plants, {including} {all types of} plants that produce their own type of seeds and {all types of} trees that produce their own type of fruit with seeds inside. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent. ¹³Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "I command there to be sources of light in the sky that divide the day{time} from the night{time}. They must also mark when important things happen, and {they must} show when seasons, days and years begin {and end}. ¹⁵They must function as lights in the sky that shine {light} on the earth." And that is {exactly} what happened. ¹⁶That is how God made the two bright lights, the brighter light to shine during the day{time}, and the weaker light to shine during the night{time}. {That is} also {when he made} the stars. ¹⁷He put those lights in the sky to shine light on the earth, ¹⁸to shine during the day{time} or during the night{time}, and to divide the light from the darkness. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent. ¹⁹Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "I command there to be large groups of {water} animals that live everywhere in the water. I also command there to be birds that fly in the sky above the earth." ²¹That is how God made the huge sea animals and all {the other} {types of} animals that live all over the place in the water, {each} having its own type of young. {That is} also {how he made} all {the different types of} birds, {each} having its own type of young. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent. ²²Then he blessed them {all} by saying {to them}, "You {water animals} must have many young so that you increase {greatly} {in number} and live all over the place in the ocean. {You} birds must {also} increase {greatly} {in number} all over the earth." ²³Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, "I command the land to produce {all types of} animals, {each} having its own type of young, {including} domestic animals, {all types of} animals that crawl and {all} the {other types of} wild animals, {each}

having its own type of young." And that is {exactly} what happened. ²⁵That is how God made {all the different types of} wild animals, {each} having its own type of young, and {all} the domestic animals, {each} having its own type of young, and all {different types of} animals that crawl on the ground, {each} having its own type of young. God observed that {what he had made was} excellent.

²⁶Then God said {to himself}, "{Now} we should make human beings to be like us and act like us, and let us put them in charge of the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, the domestic animals, and the entire earth, including all the animals that live on the earth." ²⁷So God created human beings to be like himself. {Yes,} he made them to be like himself. He {also} created them {to be} male or female.

²⁸Then God blessed them by saying to them, "Have many children so that you {and your descendants} increase {greatly} {in number} and live all over the earth and take control of it. You are in charge of the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that live on the land." ²⁹Then he {also} said {to them}, "Listen, I am {now} giving to you {for food} all {the different types of} plants that produce seeds and grow anywhere on the earth, as well as all the {different types of} trees that {produce} fruit with seeds inside it. {All of} them are yours to eat from. ³⁰In the same way, {I give} every {type of} green plant for food to all the {wild} animals {that live} on the earth, and all the birds {that fly} in the sky, and all the {other} animals {that live} on the land and breathe {air}." And that is how it was.

³¹Then God looked at everything that he had made, and he observed that it was {all} very excellent. Then evening came, and {later} morning came, {and that was} {the end of} the sixth day.

Chapter 2

¹That is how God finished {creating} the heavens and the earth, including all the many things that are in them. ²By the seventh day he had finished the work he had been doing, so he rested on that day from all that work. ³Then God established the seventh day {as a day} to bless {people}, by setting it apart as a special time {to rest and worship him}. {He did that} because on that day he no longer did the work that he had been doing, creating {everything}.

How Yahweh Created the First Man and First Woman

⁴What follows tells {more details about} the history of what {God} did when he created the heavens and the earth: During the time {when} Yahweh {who is} God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵{for a while} there were not yet any bushes {growing} in the fields on the earth, and there were not any {other} plants that had sprouted yet. {That was} because God had not {yet} sent rain to water the earth, and human beings did not exist {yet} to cultivate the ground. ⁶{During that time} mist kept seeping up from the earth and supplied water to the entire surface of the ground. ⁷Then Yahweh {who is} God {took} {some} dirt from the ground {and} formed a man {out of it}. Then he blew his breath into the man's nostrils to make him live, so that the man became alive.

⁸Now Yahweh God had planted a {large} garden in {the region of} Eden, {which was} in the east, and that is where he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹{There} Yahweh had caused all {types of} trees to grow from the ground that are beautiful to look at and {that grow fruit that is} good to eat. In the middle of the garden was the tree whose fruit makes people live {forever}, as well as the tree whose fruit enables people to know {what is} good and {what is} evil.

¹⁰There was a river flowing through {the region of} Eden that provided water for the garden. From there the river divided into four {smaller} rivers. ¹¹The first {river} {was} the Pishon {River}, which flowed around through the entire region of Havilah, {a place} where {there was} {much} gold. ¹²In fact, the gold from that region {was} {very} pure. A {type of} fragrant resin and {valuable} onyx gemstones {were} {also} in that region. ¹³The second river {was} the Gihon {River}, which flowed around through the entire region of Cush. ¹⁴The third river {was} the Tigris {River}, which flowed east of {the region of} Assyria, and the fourth river {was} the Euphrates {River}.

¹⁵After Yahweh God put the man in Eden Garden to cultivate it and take care of it, ¹⁶he commanded him, "You may eat as much {fruit} as you want {to eat} from any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except I forbid you to eat {any fruit} from the tree whose fruit enables people to know {what is} good and {what is} evil. If you eat {fruit} from that tree, on that {same} day you will definitely die."

¹⁸Then Yahweh {who is} God said, "{It is} not good {for} the man to live by himself. {So} I will create a suitable companion to help him." ¹⁹Now {previously,} Yahweh had used {dirt} from the ground to form all {the different types of} wild animals and all {the different types of} birds {that fly} in the sky. So he brought {them all} to the man to hear what he would name them. Whatever name the man gave to each {kind of} animal, that {became} the name for that kind of animal. ²⁰The man gave names to all the {different kinds of} livestock and to {all} the {different kinds of} birds {that fly} in the sky, and to all the {different kinds of} wild animals, but none of them was a suitable companion to help him.

²¹So Yahweh God caused the man to sleep deeply. Then while the man was asleep, God took a rib {out of the man's body} and filled in the place where it had been with flesh {and healed it}. ²²Next Yahweh God made a woman from the rib which he had taken out of the man's body, and he took her to the man. ²³{When the man saw her,} he exclaimed,

"Finally! Here is someone {like me}

who has bones and flesh from me!

I will call her 'woman,'

because {it was} from {the body of} a man {that} {God} took her."

²⁴Because of that, {when a man gets married,} he must leave {the home of} his father and mother, and he must unite with his wife, so that they become completely united.

²⁵{During that time} the man and his wife did not wear any clothes, but {yet} they were not ashamed {about it}.

Chapter 3

Adam and Eve Sin against Yahweh, and He Judges Them

¹Now the snake was the craftiest of all the animals that Yahweh God had created. {One day} he asked the woman, "Did God really command you to not eat {fruit} from any of the trees in the garden?" ²The woman answered him, "{No,} {God said that} we may eat fruit from {any of} the tree{s} in the garden, ³except fruit from the tree that is in the center of the garden. He commanded {us} to not eat that fruit or even touch it, because if we do, we will die!"

⁴But the snake said to the woman, "{That is not true.} You will not die. ⁵Actually, God knows that as soon as you eat {fruit} from that tree, you will understand new things, so that you will know {what is} right and {what is} wrong just like God does." ⁶The woman saw that the tree's fruit} {looked} good to eat and that the tree {itself} was {very} beautiful. She also wanted {to eat} the fruit so that it would make her wise. So she picked some of the fruit {off the tree} and ate it. She also gave {some of the fruit} to her husband, {who was} {there} with her, and he ate {it} {too}.

⁷Suddenly they both understood new things, and they realized that their bodies {were} bare. So they sewed {some} fig {tree} leaves together and made clothes for themselves {to cover their nakedness}.

⁸{Late that afternoon,} during the cool time of the day, the man and his wife heard Yahweh God's voice as he walked in the garden, but they hid from him behind some tree{s} in the garden. ⁹So Yahweh God called {out} to the man, "{Adam,} where are you?" ¹⁰The man replied, "I heard the sound of you {walking} in the garden, but I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid {from you}." ¹¹Then Yahweh God asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you {disobey me and} eat {fruit} from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹²The man replied, "The woman whom you put here {to be} with me, she {is the one who} gave me some of that fruit, so I ate {it}." ¹³Then

Yahweh God asked the woman, "What did you do?" The woman replied, "The snake tricked me, so I ate {some of the fruit}." ¹⁴So Yahweh God said to the snake, "Because you did that,

I am cursing you more {severely} than all the livestock
and all the animals in the fields!

{As a result,} you must crawl {along the ground} on your belly,
and you will eat dust {with your food}
for as long as you live.

¹⁵Besides that, I will cause you and your descendants to be enemies
with the woman and her descendants.

{In fact,} her descendant will crush your head,
and you will bite his heel."

¹⁶{Then} God said to the woman,
"I will greatly increase how much you suffer when you bear children,
{yes,} you will suffer {much pain} when you give birth.
But you will {still} desire {to be with} your husband,
and he will dominate you."

¹⁷Then God said to Adam, "You did what your wife said and ate {fruit} from the tree that I commanded you not to eat {any fruit} from.

Because of what you did, I have cursed the ground.

{As a result,} for as long as you live,
you will have to work {very} hard and suffer {to grow enough food} to eat.

¹⁸In fact, thorn plants and thistle plants {and other weeds} will grow from the ground
{and make it difficult} for you to grow {enough} crops in your fields for food.

¹⁹You will have to {work hard and} sweat a lot
in order to {produce} {enough} food to eat,
until you {die and} again become dirt,
which I created you from.

Yes, {I created} you out of dirt,
so dirt is what you will become again {after you die}."

²⁰Then Adam named his wife Eve, {which means "living,"} because she would be the mother of everyone who would ever live. ²¹Then Yahweh God made {some} clothes out of {animal} skins for Adam and his wife, and he put the clothes on them.

²²Then Yahweh God said {to himself}, "Look! The man {and his wife} have become like one of us, so that they know {what is} good and {what is} evil. So now we must do something so that they do not also pick and eat {fruit} from the tree that gives people {eternal} life, which will make them live forever!" ²³Then Yahweh God expelled the man {and his wife} from Eden Garden to work the ground which he had made them from. ²⁴After he expelled them, he stationed to the east {side} of the garden {some} {powerful} cherubim {angels} and a burning sword that was swinging around in all directions to keep everyone away from the path to the tree whose fruit makes people live {forever}.

Chapter 4

Cain Kills Abel — the First Murder

¹Then Adam had {marital} relations with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to {a son they named} Cain, {which means "obtained."} {They named him that} because she said, "Yahweh has enabled me to obtain a son!" ²Then Eve also gave birth to Cain's brother {whom they named} Abel. {When they grew up,} Abel became a shepherd, and Cain became a {crop} farmer. ³As time went by, one day Cain gave some of the crops {that he had grown} in his fields to Yahweh as a gift {to honor him}. ⁴Abel also gave {a gift} {to Yahweh}, {but what he gave was} some of the firstborn animals from his flock{s}, including some of their best parts. Yahweh was pleased with Abel and his gift. ⁵However, he was not pleased with Cain or his gift. So Cain became extremely angry, and he frowned. ⁶Then Yahweh asked him, "Why are you so angry? And why are you frowning? ⁷If you do {what is} right, I will accept {you} {and your offering}. But if you do not do {what is} right, then sin {is like a fierce animal that} is waiting outside your door {to attack you}. It wants {to control} you, but you must control it {so that you do not sin}."

⁸But {after that,} Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field {to work} {together}." So {they went out} to the field, and while they were there, Cain attacked his brother and murdered him.

⁹Later Yahweh asked Cain, "Where {is} your brother Abel?" Cain responded, "I don't know {where he is}. Is it my job to take care of my brother?" ¹⁰Then Yahweh said {to him}, "You have done a terrible thing! I see your brother's blood on the ground, and I must punish you {for killing him}!" ¹¹So from now on I am cursing you {so that you will not be able to grow food} from the ground, which is where your brother's blood spilled out when you murdered him. ¹²Whenever you {try to} farm the ground, it will no longer produce good crops for you. {From now on,} you will be an outcast who wanders around on the earth {without a permanent home}."

¹³Cain replied to Yahweh, "You are punishing me more {severely} than I can endure. ¹⁴Look, you have now banished me from {farming} the ground, and I will be far away from you. I will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, so that whoever sees me will kill me!" ¹⁵Yahweh replied to him, "So then, {I will warn everyone that} I will take vengeance on whoever kills you {and punish him} seven times more {severely} {than I am punishing you}!" Then he put a mark on Cain to warn everyone who met him not to kill him. ¹⁶Then Cain left Yahweh's presence and lived in the region of Nod, {which means "wandering,"} {which was} east of {the region of} Eden.

Cain's Descendants

¹⁷Then Cain had {marital} relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to {a son they named} Enoch. {At that time} Cain was building a city, so he named the city after his son Enoch. ¹⁸When Enoch {grew up,} he had {a son named} Irad. Then Irad had {a son named} Mehujael. Then Mehujael had {a son named} Methushael. Then Methushael had {a son named} Lamech.

¹⁹When Lamech {grew up,} he married two wives. His first wife's name was Adah, and his other wife's name was Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to {a son named} Jabal. He {grew up and} became the first of {all} those who live {in} tents

and raise livestock {for a living}. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal. He became the first of all {those} who play harps and flutes.

²²{Lamech's other wife} Zillah also gave birth to {a son named} Tubal Cain. He {was the first of all those who} make all {kinds} of tools {and other things} out of bronze and iron. Tubal Cain had a sister {whose name was} Naamah.

²³{One day,} Lamech bragged to his {two} wives,

"Adah and Zillah, listen to what I have to say.

My wives, listen to this:

I killed a young man for wounding me!

In fact, {I killed} that man {just} because he bruised me.

²⁴God will avenge Cain seven times,

but {I,} Lamech {avenge myself} 77 times!"

People Start to Worship God Using His Name Yahweh

²⁵Then Adam had {marital} relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son, and she named him Seth, {which means "given."} {She named him that} because {when he was born,} {she had said}, "God has given me another child to replace Abel, whom Cain killed." ²⁶Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

During that time people began to worship {God} by using His name Yahweh.

Chapter 5

The Descendants from Adam to Noah

¹Here {is} the {family} record of Adam and his descendants: On the day when God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. ²He {also} created them {to be} male and female, and on the {same} day that he created them, he blessed them and named them "human beings."

³When Adam was 130 years old, he had {a son} who was like him in many ways, and he named him Seth. ⁴After Seth's birth, Adam lived {another} 800 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ⁵So Adam lived a total of 930 years, and {then} he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he had {a son named} Enosh. ⁷After Enosh's birth, Seth lived {another} 807 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ⁸So Seth lived a total of 912 years, and {then} he died.

⁹When Enosh was ninety years old, he had {a son named} Kenan. ¹⁰After Kenan's birth, Enosh lived {another} 815 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ¹¹So Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and {then} he died.

¹²When Kenan was seventy years old, he had {a son named} Mahalalel. ¹³After Mahalalel's birth, Kenan lived {another} 840 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ¹⁴So Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and {then} he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he had {a son named} Jared. ¹⁶After Jared's birth, Mahalalel lived {another} 830 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ¹⁷So Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and {then} he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he had {a son named} Enoch. ¹⁹After Enoch's birth, Jared lived {another} 800 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ²⁰So Jared lived a total of 962 years, and {then} he died.

²¹When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he had {a son named} Methuselah. ²²After Methuselah's birth, Enoch lived {in a close relationship} with God for {another} 300 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ²³So Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴Then while he was {still} living {in a close relationship} with God, {suddenly} he was no longer {on earth}, because God had taken him away {to be with him}.

²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he had {a son named} Lamech. ²⁶After Lamech's birth, Methuselah lived {another} 782 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ²⁷So Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and {then} he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he had a son, ²⁹and he named him Noah {which means "rest,"} {because} he said, "This {son} will give us rest from the difficult work that we have to do because Yahweh has cursed the ground." ³⁰After Noah's birth, Lamech lived {another} 595 years. He {also} had {other} sons as well as daughters. ³¹So Lamech lived a total of 777 years, {and} then he died.

³²After Noah was 500 years old, he had {sons whose names were} Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Chapter 6

God Destroys the World with a Flood

People on the Earth Become More and More Evil

¹Now it happened that people began to multiply {in number} all over the earth, and they were having daughters. ²{When those girls grew up,} the sons of God saw that they {were} beautiful, so they chose any {of them} that they wanted and married them. ³Then Yahweh said {to himself}, "My Spirit will not put up with human beings forever, because they {are} very corrupt. I will give them 120 years {to repent}."

⁴{People called} the Nephilim lived on the earth during that time and also later on. {That happened} when the sons of God had relations with the daughters of human beings, and those women gave birth to children for them. Their children were {the Nephilim, who were} the famous mighty men who lived long ago.

⁵Yahweh saw that the people on the earth had become very evil, and that everything they thought about and desired {was} completely evil all the time. ⁶As a result, he regretted that he had made them {to live} on the earth, and he felt very sad. ⁷So he said {to himself}, "I will completely destroy from the earth {all} the people whom I created. {In fact}, {I will destroy} {not only} {all} the people, but also {all} the animals, including the creatures that crawl {on the ground} and the birds {that fly} in the sky, because I regret that I {ever} made them." ⁸But Yahweh was pleased with Noah.

Noah Prepares for the Flood

⁹Here is {more of} the history about Noah and his descendants: Noah {was} a man who did what was right. Out of all the people living at that time, he was the only one {whom God considered} blameless, {and} he lived in a close relationship with God. ¹⁰Eventually Noah had {his} three sons, {whose names were} Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now {the people on} the earth had become wicked according to God's standards, and all over the earth they were doing violent things. ¹²God saw how wicked {everyone on} the earth had become, because all the people on the earth were {continually} behaving in evil ways. ¹³So he said to Noah, "I am going to destroy all people, because all over the earth they are doing violent things. In fact, I am going to destroy them and {everything else on} the earth

{too}. ¹⁴{Therefore} {you must} build a {very} large boat for yourself {and your family} out of the best wood {for building boats}. Build rooms inside the boat, and seal it inside and outside with tar {to keep water out}. ¹⁵You must make the boat like this: It {must be} 140 meters long, twenty-three meters wide, and fourteen meters high. ¹⁶Make a half-meter high opening between the top of the walls of the ark and its roof {all the way around}, {to let light and air in}. Put a door in the side of the boat, and build three levels {on the inside}. ¹⁷Listen {carefully} to me: I am going to bring a flood over the {whole} earth, which will destroy all the creatures under the sky that breathe {air}. {As a result,} every {living} thing that {is} on land will die! ¹⁸But I will make a {special} agreement between me and you, so you must get on board the boat, and {take} your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹You must also take into the boat two of every {kind of} living creature, including every {kind of} animal, so that they stay alive with you. Each pair must include {one} male and {one} female. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird and every kind of animal, including every kind of creature that moves on the ground, will come to you so that you keep them alive {in the boat}. ²¹You must {also} gather all the different kinds of food that people and animals eat and store it {on the boat} with you, so that there will be {enough} food for you {and your family} and for {all} the animals." ²²So, {that is what} Noah did; he did everything exactly as God had commanded him {to do}.

Chapter 7

Yahweh Sends the Flood

¹Then {after they had finished building the boat,} Yahweh commanded Noah, "You and your entire family must go into the boat, because I know {that} you {are} {the only one} among the people living today {who is} living rightly according to my standards. ²Take with you seven male and female pairs of every {kind of} pure animal, and {one} male and female pair of {every kind of} impure animal. ³Also {take} seven male and female pairs of {every kind of} bird {that flies} in the sky, so that {later} their offspring will live all over the earth. ⁴{You must do that,} because seven days from today I will make it rain {continuously} {all} over the earth {for} forty days and nights. In that way, I will completely destroy from the earth every living creature that I have made." ⁵Then Noah did everything {exactly} as Yahweh had commanded him {to do}.

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷{That is when} he and his wife, and his sons and their wives went together into the boat so that they would not die in the flood. ⁸{Also,} {every kind of} pure animal and {every kind of} impure animal and {every kind of} bird, {including} every {kind of creature} that lives on land, ⁹came in pairs to Noah {and went} into the boat. {They were} male and female {pairs}, which was exactly what God had commanded him {to take along}.

¹⁰So it happened {that} when the seven days {that God had spoken about} had passed, water started to flood the earth. ¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month {of the year}, on that {very} day all the springs in the deep ocean started pouring out water. {God also caused} the water in the sky to start pouring down, as if he had opened {huge} floodgates {in the sky}, ¹²so that it rained {continuously} {all} over the earth {for} forty days and nights.

¹³{So it was that} on the same day {that the flood started}, Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, along with his wife and his sons' three wives {all} entered the boat. ¹⁴They had with them every kind of living creature, including every kind of livestock and every {other} kind of creature that lives on the land, and every kind of bird {and} everything {else} that flies. ¹⁵Pairs of every {kind of} living thing that breathes {air} came to Noah {and went} into the boat. ¹⁶The animals that went into {the boat} {were} male and female {pairs} from every {kind of} living thing, which was exactly what God had commanded Noah {to take along}. Then {after they were all inside,} Yahweh closed the door {of the boat} behind them.

¹⁷{For} forty days {and forty nights} the flood kept getting deeper and deeper {all} over the earth, and as the water rose, it lifted up the boat so that it floated {on the water} above the ground. ¹⁸So the floodwaters continued to rise and get much deeper {all} over the earth, while the boat floated {safely} on the water. ¹⁹Eventually the water

became so deep on the earth that {even} all the highest mountains everywhere under the sky were under water. ²⁰{In fact,} the water rose {at least} seven meters above {the tops of} the {highest} mountains, so that they were {completely} under water. ²¹Then all the creatures that lived on land died. {That} included {all} the birds, the livestock, and the {other} living creatures, including every {kind of} creature that lived in large groups on the earth, as well as all the people. ²²Every living creature that breathed air and {lived} on dry land died. ²³That is how Yahweh completely destroyed all the living creatures that {were} on the earth, including {all} people and livestock and {all the other} creatures that lived {on the land} and also the birds {that flew} in the sky. Yes, he completely destroyed everything {that lived} on the earth, so that the only ones who were still alive were Noah and his family and the animals that were with them in the boat.

God Causes the Flood to Go Away

²⁴{Deep} water continued to cover the {entire} world {for} 150 days.

Chapter 8

¹But God never forgot Noah {and his family} and all the animals, both wild and tame, that {were} with them in the boat. So he caused a wind to blow over {the water that was covering} the earth, so that the water {started to} go down. ²{He also caused} the springs in the deep {ocean} to stop {gushing out water}, and {he caused} the water to stop pouring from the sky, so that it stopped raining. ³Then the water steadily went down from {the surface of} the land. After the 150 days {had passed}, the water had gone down ⁴so {much} that on the seventeenth day of the seventh month {of the year}, the boat came to rest on {one of} the mountains in the Ararat {mountain range}. ⁵The floodwaters continued to go down until on the first {day} of the tenth month {of the year}, the peaks of the {surrounding} mountains became visible {above the water}.

⁶After forty {more} days {had passed}, Noah opened a window in the boat that he had made, ⁷and he released a raven, which kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up {more} from the land. ⁸Meanwhile Noah {also} released a dove from the boat to find out if the water had gone down from the land. ⁹But water was {still} covering the entire earth, so the dove did not find anywhere to land and rest. Then it returned to Noah in the boat, and Noah reached out, caught it, and brought it {back} into the boat. ¹⁰Noah waited seven more days, then he released the dove from the boat again. ¹¹That evening the dove returned to him, and he saw that {it had} a fresh green olive {tree} leaf in its beak! That is how Noah realized that the water had gone down {further} from the land. ¹²Then he waited seven more days and he released the dove {again}, but {this time} it did not come back to him again.

¹³So it was, when {Noah was} 601 years old, on the first {day} of the first month {of the year}, the water had {almost} dried up from the land. So Noah took off {part of} the roof of the boat and looked {around}, and he saw that {much of} the land's surface was {almost} dry. ¹⁴Then by the twenty-seventh day of the second month {of the year}, the land had dried off.

¹⁵Then God commanded Noah, ¹⁶"Come out of the boat, together with your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives. ¹⁷Bring out all the animals that {are} with you, all of them, including the birds, tame animals, and every {other} animal that moves on land. Then they can live all over the earth; {yes,} they will have many young and increase {in number} {all} over the earth." ¹⁸So Noah came out {of the boat}, along with his wife and his sons and their wives. ¹⁹All the animals, {including} all the animals that crawl and all the birds {and} everything {else} that lives on land, {also} came out of the boat in groups of their own kind.

Yahweh Makes a Covenant with Mankind and All Other Living Things

²⁰Then Noah made an altar {out of large stones} {to offer sacrifices} to Yahweh. Next he chose {some} of every {kind of} animal and bird that is acceptable to sacrifice, and he {killed them and} burned {their bodies} on the altar as an offering {to Yahweh} {to worship him}. ²¹Yahweh smelled the aroma {of the offerings} and was pleased, and

he thought to himself, "Never again will I curse the ground because of mankind's sins, even though everything they desire and think about is evil from the time they are children. And never again will I destroy all living creatures the way I just did.

²²As long as the earth still exists,

each year there will always be a season to plant seeds and a season to harvest crops,

as well as cold weather and hot weather,

summer and winter,

and day and night."

Chapter 9

¹Then God caused Noah and his sons to prosper by saying to them, "Have many children so that you and your descendants will become numerous and live all over the earth. ²Every living creature on the earth will be afraid and terrified of you, including every bird that flies in the sky, along with every creature that moves on land, and all the fish in the ocean. I have put them all under your authority. ³From now on every creature that is alive and moves is yours to eat as food. In the same way that I provided you green plants for food, now I provide you everything for food. ⁴However, you must never eat meat that still has its blood in it, which made it live. ⁵Also, I definitely require that anyone who murders someone must die. In fact, if any animal kills a human being, I require that it must die. That is also true for human beings: If anyone murders another person, I require that he must die.

⁶That's right, you must put to death

anyone who murders a human being,

because God made human beings

to be like himself.

⁷"Now as for you, have many children so that you and your descendants will become numerous. Spread out all over the earth and become numerous everywhere."

⁸Then God said to Noah and his sons, ⁹"Listen carefully to me: I am making my agreement with you and your descendants. ¹⁰It is also with all the living creatures that are with you, including the birds, the livestock, and all the other living creatures on the earth that are with you. That includes all those that came out of the ark and all the living creatures that will ever live on the earth. ¹¹My agreement that I'm establishing with you is that never again will all living things die from a flood. "That's right, never again will I use a flood to destroy everything on the earth."

¹²Then God continued, "This is how I will show everyone that I have made this agreement with you and with all the living creatures that are with you, as well as with all the people and animals that will ever live: ¹³I will put my rainbow among the clouds in the sky to remind everyone that I have made this agreement with every creature that lives on the earth. ¹⁴So whenever I cause clouds to form in the sky above the earth and a rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵then I will not forget to keep my agreement that I have established with you and all living creatures of every kind. I promise that I will never again use a flood to destroy all living creatures. ¹⁶Yes, whenever a rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and keep my permanent agreement which I have established with all people and all animals that live on the earth."

¹⁷Then God concluded by saying to Noah, "A rainbow is what I will use to remind everyone that I have made this agreement with all the people and animals that live on the earth."

Noah and His Three Sons After the Flood

¹⁸Noah's sons who came out of the boat {after the flood} were Shem, Ham, and Japheth; it was Ham who {was} Canaan's father. ¹⁹It was the descendants of Noah's three sons who populated the entire earth {again}.

²⁰After a while, Noah, who was a farmer, planted {some} grape vines {and made wine from the grapes}. ²¹Then {one day} he drank {too much of} the wine, so that he became drunk and was {lying} naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, {who was} Canaan's father, saw that his father was naked, and he went outside and told his two brothers {about it}. ²³However, Shem and Japheth took a robe, and held it {between them} at shoulder level and walked backward {into the tent} and covered their father's naked body {with it}. {As they did that,} they kept their faces turned away {from him} so that they would not see him naked.

²⁴Later Noah woke up from being drunk, and he found out that his youngest son {Ham} had dishonored him. ²⁵So he exclaimed {about him},

"I {ask God to} curse {Ham's son} Canaan!

Canaan will be the lowest servant for his relatives."

²⁶Then Noah said,

"Praise Yahweh, {who is} the God {who takes care} of Shem!

May God cause Canaan to be Shem's servant.

²⁷I {also} ask God to give Japheth much {land}

and enable him to live together {in peace} with Shem.

May God {also} cause Canaan to be Japheth's servant."

²⁸From {the time that} the flood {began}, Noah lived {another} 350 years, ²⁹so that he lived a total of 950 years before he died.

Chapter 10

The Descendants of Noah's Sons

¹This is the record of {the names of} Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the descendants they had after the flood {was over}.

Japheth's Descendants

²Japheth's sons {were} Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³Gomer's sons {were} Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴Javan's sons {were} Elishah and Tarshish, {and he was the ancestor of} the Kittites and the Dodanites.

⁵From Japheth's {descendants} came the people groups who lived {in regions} near the {Mediterranean} Sea. They moved to different places {and settled} in their {own} territories, and each {group} spoke its own language. They each had their {own} families, which {grew and} became their own people groups.

Ham's Descendants

⁶Ham's sons {were} Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷Cush's sons {were} Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtecah. And Raamah's sons {were} Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush {also} had {a son named} Nimrod, who was the first {person} on earth to be a powerful {ruler}. ⁹He was {also} a great hunter whom Yahweh blessed. That is why people say {about other great men}, "{That man is} like Nimrod, a great hunter whom Yahweh blessed." ¹⁰Nimrod started ruling as king {over} {the cities of} Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh, {which were} {all} {located} in the region of Shinar. ¹¹From there he went to {the region of} Assyria, where he built {the cities of} Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen, {which is located} between {the cities of} Nineveh and the great city of Calah.

¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and Caphtorites. The Philistines descended from the Casluhites.

¹⁵Canaan had Sidon {who was} his firstborn {son}. {He was} also {the ancestor of} the Hittites, ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. Later, those families {that descended} from Canaan spread out, ¹⁹so that the territory where they lived reached from {the city of} Sidon {in the north}, all the way {south} toward {the city of} Gerar to {the city of} Gaza, {then} as far {east} as {the cities of} Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, all the way to {the city of} Lasha.

²⁰Those {people} {were} Ham's descendants and each one had his own family. Each family {grew and} became its own people group that spoke its own language and lived in its own territory.

Shem's Descendants

²¹Shem also had {some} sons. He {was} the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber, and his older brother was Japheth. ²²Shem's sons {were} Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

²³Aram's sons {were} Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arpachshad had {a son named} Shelah, then Shelah had {a son named} Eber. ²⁵Then Eber had two sons. The name of the first {one} {was} Peleg, {which means "division,"} because during his lifetime {the people on} the earth divided {into separate groups} {and spread out everywhere}. Peleg's {younger} brother's name {was} Joktan.

²⁶Joktan had {sons named} Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. Those {were} all Joktan's sons. ³⁰The region where they {and their descendants} lived reached from {the city of} Mesha {in the west} all the way to {the city of} Sephar, {which is in} the hill country in the east.

³¹Those {people} {are} Shem's descendants and each one had his own family. Each family {grew and} became its own people group that spoke its own language and lived in its own territory.

³²{All} those family groups descended from Noah's sons. Each family group had its own descendants and became its own people group. In fact, after the flood {all} the people groups on the earth descended from them and spread out everywhere.

Chapter 11

The Tower of Babel

¹Now {at first,} all {the people on} the earth spoke the same language, so that everyone understood each other. ²As time passed, they moved from the eastern {regions} and {eventually} came to a wide, flat valley in the region of

Shinar and stayed there. ³Then they urged each other, "Come on, let us {work together and} make bricks {from clay} and put them in fire to make them hard." They used bricks {to build with} instead of stone, and they used tar {between the bricks} instead of mortar. ⁴Then they urged {each other}, "Come on, we should {work together and} build a city for us {to live in} that has a {very} tall building that reaches high into the sky. {That way} we will become famous, and we will not separate from each other {and live} all over the earth."

⁵But {one day} Yahweh came down {from heaven} and looked at the city and the {very} tall building that the people were building. ⁶Then he said, "Look, they are one people {group}, and they all speak the same language. This {is} {only} the beginning of what they can do {together}. Soon they will be able to do anything they plan to do. ⁷{So} we must go down there {now} and mix up their language so that they are not able to understand what they say to each other." ⁸In that way, Yahweh caused the people to leave from there and live in different places all over the world, so that they had to stop building the city {and the tall building}. ⁹That is why the name of the city is Babel, {which means "mixed up,"} because that is where Yahweh mixed up the language that everyone on the earth shared, and {in that way} he made them spread out from there all over the earth.

The History about Abraham 11:10-25:18

Shem's Descendants down to Abram

¹⁰This is the record of Shem's descendants:

Two years after the flood {began}, when Shem was 100 years old, he had {a son named} Arpachshad. ¹¹After Arpachshad was born, Shem lived {another} 500 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

¹²When Arpachshad was thirty-five years old, he had {a son named} Shelah. ¹³After Shelah was born, Arpachshad lived {another} 403 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

¹⁴When Shelah was thirty years old, he had {a son named} Eber. ¹⁵After Eber was born, Shelah lived {another} 403 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

¹⁶When Eber was thirty-four years old, he had {a son named} Peleg. ¹⁷After Peleg was born, Eber lived {another} 430 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg was thirty years old, he had {a son named} Reu. ¹⁹After Reu was born, Peleg lived {another} 209 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

²⁰When Reu was thirty-two years old, he had {a son named} Serug. ²¹After Serug was born, Reu lived {another} 207 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

²²When Serug was thirty years old, he had {a son named} Nahor. ²³After Nahor was born, Serug lived {another} 200 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

²⁴When Nahor was twenty-nine years old, he had {a son named} Terah. ²⁵After Terah was born, Nahor lived {another} 119 years. He {also} had {other} sons, as well as daughters.

²⁶After Terah was seventy years old, he had {sons whose names were} Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Terah's Children, including Abram

²⁷Here is the history about Terah and his descendants: Terah's sons were Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran had a son {whose name was} Lot. ²⁸While his father was still alive, Haran died in the land where he was born, in {the city of} Ur where the Chaldean people lived. ²⁹Meanwhile Abram and Nahor each married a wife. Abram's wife was

named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was Milcah. Milcah and {her sister} Iscah were the daughters of {Nahor's brother} Haran. ³⁰But Sarai was not able to become pregnant, {so} she did not have any children.

³¹Then {one day,} Terah gathered his son Abram and his grandson Lot, {who was} Haran's son, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, who was Abram's wife, and they {all} left from {the city of} Ur where the Chaldean people lived to travel to the region of Canaan. But when they arrived at {the city of} Haran, they decided to live there {instead}. ³²Then {many years later,} when Terah was 205 years old, he died {there} in {the city of} Haran.

Chapter 12

God Tells Abram to Move to Canaan

¹{One day} Yahweh commanded Abram, "You must move away from your homeland and your relatives, including your father's family, {and move} to the land that I will guide you to.

²I will make you {and your descendants} become an important people group,

and I will cause you {all} to prosper.

I will make you well-known,

and you {and your descendants} will bless {many people}.

³I will bless everyone who blesses you,

but I will curse anyone who curses you.

I will use you {and your descendants}

to bless all the people on the earth."

⁴So Abram left {the city of Haran} exactly as Yahweh had commanded him {to do}, and {his nephew} Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left from there. ⁵He took {with him} his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and everything that they owned, including servants {and everything else} they had acquired in {the city of} Haran, and they {all} started traveling to the region of Canaan. When they arrived there, ⁶they traveled through that region as far as the city of Shechem, to Moreh's oak tree. At that time the Canaanites were {still living} in that land, ⁷but Yahweh came to Abram and said {to him}, "I will give this land to your descendants." So Abram built an altar {out of large stones} in that place {and burned sacrifices on it} to worship Yahweh, because Yahweh had appeared to him {there}.

⁸From {the city of} Shechem, Abram {and his family} moved {south} to the hill country that was east of {the town of} Bethel. They set up their tents between Bethel to the west and {the town of} Ai to the east. There Abram built another altar {and burned sacrifices on it} to worship Yahweh, and he addressed Yahweh by {his} name as he worshiped him. ⁹Then Abram {and his family} moved from place to place {southward} until they reached the Negev {Desert}.

Abram and Sarai Go to {the Country of} Egypt {to Escape a Famine}

¹⁰Now there was a serious food shortage in that region, that was so severe that Abram {and his family} {left there and} went down to {the country of} Egypt to live for a while. ¹¹Just before they arrived in Egypt, Abram said to his wife Sarai, "Please listen {to me}: you {are} a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the people in Egypt see you {with me}, they will say that you are my wife. Then they will kill me and let you live {so that they can take you}. ¹³{So} please tell people {that} you {are} my sister so that they will treat me well because of you and let me live."

¹⁴That is {exactly} what happened: When Abram {and his family} arrived in {the country of} Egypt, the people there noticed that Sarai was {truly} very beautiful. ¹⁵When some officers under Pharaoh {the king of Egypt} noticed her, they highly recommended her to him. So he had them bring her to his palace {to be one of his wives}. ¹⁶The king thought that Abram was Sarai's brother, so he treated him well. He gave him many sheep and cattle, as well as men and women servants, male and female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷But since {King} Pharaoh had taken Abram's wife Sarai, Yahweh afflicted the king and his family {with} severe illnesses. ¹⁸So the king summoned Abram {before him} and said {to him}, "You have treated me very badly! You should have told me that Sarai {is} your wife! ¹⁹You should not have said that she {is} your sister, so that I ended up taking her to be my wife! So now, here is your wife. Take {her} and leave {my country}!" ²⁰Then {King} Pharaoh ordered {some of} his soldiers to make sure that Abram left, so they forced him to leave {the country}, along with his wife and everything that he owned.

Chapter 13

Abram and Lot Go Separate Ways

¹So Abram left {the country of} Egypt {and traveled} {back} to the Negev {Desert}. {He took} with him his wife and everything that they owned, and also {his nephew} Lot. ²{By that time} Abram {had become} very rich, so that he owned {many} livestock and {much} silver and gold. ³From the Negev {Desert} he {and his family} traveled from place to place {northward} {until they came} to {the town of} Bethel, to the place where he had lived in tents before, between {the towns of} Bethel and Ai. ⁴{That was} the {same} place where he had previously built an altar. There {again} he {sacrificed animals on the altar and} worshiped Yahweh by name.

⁵Lot was traveling with {his uncle} Abram, and he {and his family} also owned many sheep and cattle, as well as {many} tents. ⁶In fact, there was not enough land to have enough food and water for both families {and their animals} if they lived in the same area. They each owned so many servants and animals that it was not possible for them to {all} live near each other. ⁷As a result, the men who took care of Abram's livestock and the men who took care of Lot's livestock started to argue with each other. Besides that, the Canaanites and the Perizzites were {also} living in that land at that time.

⁸Finally {one day} Abram said to Lot, "Please, since we {are} close relatives, we need to do something so that you and I and our herdsmen will not argue. ⁹Look, the entire land is available to you {to choose from}. Please {choose where you want to live, and} let's live in separate places. If {you choose} {the land to} the left {of here}, then I will take {the land to} the right. Or if {you choose} {the land to} the right {of here}, then I will take {the land to} the left."

¹⁰Lot looked {all} around and he noticed that the entire Jordan {River} Valley, all the way to {the town of} Zoar, had plenty of water. {It was lush and green} like the garden that Yahweh had planted or like the country of Egypt. {That is what it was like} before Yahweh destroyed {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah {which were also in that valley}.

¹¹So Lot chose the entire Jordan {River} Valley for himself. Then he {left Abram and} moved to the east {to live there}. That is how Abram and Lot ended up living in different places. ¹²Abram stayed {where he was} in the region of Canaan, while Lot lived {in another part of the region} among the cities in the {Jordan River} valley and {eventually} moved his tents to {the city of} Sodom {and stayed there}. ¹³But the people {who lived} in {the city of} Sodom {were} extremely wicked and were {always} sinning against Yahweh.

God Promises to Give Abram {the Land of} Canaan and Many Descendants

¹⁴After Lot had left Abram, Yahweh said to Abram, "Look {all} around you from the place where you {live}. Look north, south, east, and west. ¹⁵All the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants {to own} forever. ¹⁶In fact, I will give you so many descendants that they will be as {numerous as} the {specks of} dust on the earth. No one will be able to count how many descendants you have, just as no one can count how many {specks of} dust

there are. ¹⁷{So now,} start walking through the land {in all directions}. Go throughout the entire land {and look it over}, because I am giving it {all} to you." ¹⁸Then Abram {obeyed Yahweh and} moved his tents and settled near the oak trees {on the land} owned by {a man named} Mamre, near {the city of} Hebron. There he built an altar {out of stones} {and burned sacrifices on it} to {thank and} worship Yahweh.

Chapter 14

Abram Rescues Lot from Four Kings

¹During that time Amraphel was the king over {the land of} Shinar, Arioch was the king over {the city of} Ellasar, Chedorlaomer was the king over {the land of} Elam, and Tidal was the king over the Goyim {people}. ²Those {four} kings {joined forces and} went to war against {five other kings, including} Bera {who was} the king over {the city of} Sodom, Birsha {who was} the king over {the city of} Gomorrah, Shinab {who was} the king over {the city of} Admah, Shemeber {who was} the king over {the city of} Zeboyim, and the king over {the town of} Bela, which {is also called} Zoar. ³Those {five kings} all united their armies {as allies} {and fought against the four kings} in the Siddim Valley, where the Salt Sea {is now}.

⁴{For} twelve years the five kings had paid tribute to {King} Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they started to rebel {against him}. ⁵Then during the fourteenth year {King} Chedorlaomer and the {three} kings who {were} his allies {united their armies and} went {to war} {against all their enemies}. {First} they defeated the Rephaites in {the city of} Ashteroth-Karnaim, then the Zuzites in {the city of} Ham, the Emites in {the city of} Shaveh-Kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites {who lived} in the Seir Mountains {all the way} to {the city of} El Paran, which {is located} near the desert. ⁷Next those {four} kings {and their armies} turned around and went to {the city of} En Mishpat, which {is also called} Kadesh. They conquered the entire territory where the Amalekites lived, as well as the Amorites, who lived in {the city of} Hazazon Tamar.

⁸Then the king over {the city of} Sodom, the king over {the city of} Gomorrah, the king over {the city of} Admah, the king over {the city of} Zeboyim, and the king over {the town of} Bela, which {is also called} Zoar, marched out {with their armies} into the Siddim Valley and got ready to fight ⁹against Chedorlaomer {who was} the king over {the land of} Elam, Tidal {who was} the king over the Goyim, Amraphel {who was} the king over {the land of} Shinar, and Arioch {who was} the king over {the kingdom of} Ellasar. {Then} the four kings attacked the five {kings} {and started defeating them}.

¹⁰Now there were many tar pits in the Siddim Valley. As the kings over {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah {and their soldiers} were running away {from the battle}, some {of their soldiers} died there {in the tar pits}. Those who escaped ran away to the mountains {to hide}. ¹¹Then the four kings seized all the {people's} belongings in {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah, including all their food, and carried it away. ¹²They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his belongings, since he was living in {the city of} Sodom.

¹³But someone {from Sodom} escaped {from the battle} and went to Abram the Hebrew and reported {to him} {what had happened}. {At that time} Abram was {still} living near the oak trees that were owned by Mamre the Amorite, {who was} the brother of Eshcol and Aner. Those {three} men had made a pact with Abram {to be his allies}. ¹⁴When Abram heard that {the four kings} had captured his nephew {Lot}, he called together 318 of his servants who had been born in his household and were skilled warriors. Then {together with his allies} they chased after {the four kings and their armies} all the way to {the town of} Dan. ¹⁵There during the night Abram and his men divided {into groups}, {surprise} attacked the {four} kings {and their soldiers}, and defeated them. Then they chased them as far as {the town of} Hobah, which {is located} north of {the city of} Damascus. ¹⁶As a result, Abram recovered all the {people's} belongings {that the four kings had taken}. He also rescued his nephew Lot and his belongings, as well as the women and {all} the other people {whom the kings had captured}.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

¹⁷After Abram defeated {King} Chedorlaomer and the {other} {three} kings who were Chedorlaomer's allies, he started to return {home}. When he reached the Shaveh Valley, which {is also called} the King's Valley, the king over {the city of} Sodom came there and welcomed him. ¹⁸Melchizedek {who was} the king over {the city of} Salem {also came there, and he} brought food and wine {for Abram and his men to eat and drink}. {King} Melchizedek {was also} a priest who served the God who is greater {than all other gods}. ¹⁹So he blessed Abram by saying {to him},

"May the greatest God, who owns heaven and earth, bless you.

²⁰Praise the greatest God,

because he enabled you to defeat your enemies!"

Then Abram gave {King} Melchizedek ten percent of everything {that he had recovered in the battle}. ²¹After that, the king over {the city of} Sodom said to Abram, "{Please} return to me the people {whom you rescued}, but keep for yourself {their} belongings {that you recovered}." ²²But Abram replied to him, "{I will not keep anything, because} I have raised my hand {and sworn} to Yahweh, {who is} the greatest God {and} the One who owns heaven and earth, ²³{that} I will not {accept} anything that is yours {or your people's}, not even a {piece of} string or the strap from a sandal. That way you can never say that you {were the one who} made me rich. ²⁴{So} I {will} only {keep} what my warriors ate and the part {of the plunder} that Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre deserve for being my allies. {Please} let them have their part {of the plunder}."

Chapter 15

God Makes a Covenant with Abram

¹After that, Yahweh said to Abram in a vision,

"Abram, do not be afraid.

I will protect you,

{and} I will give you a very great reward." ²But Abram said {to him}, "Yahweh my Master, even if you reward me greatly, {that will not benefit me}, since I still have no children. So {when I die,} the one who will inherit all that I have {is} {my servant} Eliezer {who is} {a foreigner} from {the city of} Damascus." ³Then Abram continued, "That's right, you have not given me any children, so that now {when I die}, {one of} my household servants will inherit everything I own!" ⁴But immediately Yahweh said to Abram, "{No,} your servant {Eliezer} will not inherit your property, rather it will be your very own {biological} son who will inherit it." ⁵Then Yahweh took Abram outside {his tent} and said {to him}, "Look {up} at the {night} sky and count how many stars there are, if {in fact} you are able to count them {all}." {While Abram was looking at the stars,} Yahweh said to him, "That is how many descendants you will have."

⁶Abram trusted Yahweh, and because of that, Yahweh considered him to be righteous. ⁷Then Yahweh said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you {here} from {the city of} Ur that the Chaldeans rule, to give this land to you to own."

⁸But Abram asked {him}, "Yahweh my Master, how can I be sure that this land will be mine?" ⁹Yahweh replied, "Bring me a heifer, a female goat and a male sheep, each of which is three years old, as well as a dove and a young pigeon." ¹⁰So {the next day} Abram brought all those {animals} to Yahweh {and killed them}. Then he cut the animals' bodies in half lengthwise and placed each half a short space across from the other half {in two rows}, except for the birds, which he did not cut in half. ¹¹Then {some} vultures flew down {and landed} on the {animal} bodies {to eat them}, but Abram chased them away.

¹²Later as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and suddenly, it became completely dark, and he became terrified. ¹³Then Yahweh said to him, "I want you to know that your descendants will live as foreigners in a country that is not their own. They will serve the people {of that country} {as slaves}, and those people will treat them cruelly for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish those people whom they serve. After that, your descendants will leave {that country} and take many possessions with them. ¹⁵As for you, after you have lived a good long life, you will die peacefully and join your ancestors {who have died before you}. ¹⁶Then four generations later, your descendants will return here {to live}, because that is when the Amorites will have sinned as much as I will allow {before I take away their land and give it to your descendants}.

¹⁷When the sun had set, it became {very} dark. Then suddenly a {clay} pot {appeared} {that was full} of burning coals and had smoke coming from it, and also a blazing torch, and they {both} went between the {animal} halves. ¹⁸At that time Yahweh made a {special} agreement with Abram and said, "I am giving your descendants this land, {which extends} from Egypt's river {in the south} to the great Euphrates River {in the north}. ¹⁹{That includes} {the land which belongs to} the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Chapter 16

Abram and {Sarai's Servant} Hagar Have {a Son Named} Ishmael

¹Now Abram's wife Sarai had {still} not given birth {to any children} for him, but she owned an Egyptian servant woman whose name was Hagar. ²So she told Abram, "Please listen {to this}: {As you know,} Yahweh has not allowed me to have {any} children, {so} please have {marital} relations with my servant woman {Hagar} {so that} maybe I can have a family through her {children}." Abram agreed to do what Sarai requested. ³So Abram's wife Sarai gave her Egyptian servant Hagar to her husband Abram to be his {second} wife. {This happened} after Abram {and Sarai} had lived in the region of Canaan for ten years.

⁴Then Abram had {marital} relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when she realized that she was pregnant, she started to disrespect her mistress {Sarai}. ⁵So Sarai complained to Abram, "It is your fault that I am suffering! I gave my servant to you {to sleep with}, but now that she realizes that she is pregnant, she disrespects me! I ask Yahweh to judge whether it is you or I who is responsible {for this}!" ⁶Abram replied to her, "Listen, you are in charge of your servant. Do with her what{ever} you think is best." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she ran away {from home to get away} from her.

⁷Then one of Yahweh's angels came to Hagar by a spring of water in the desert. It was the spring by the road to {the city of} Shur. ⁸And the angel asked {her}, "Hagar, who serves Sarai, where are you coming from, and where are you headed?" She answered {him}, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." ⁹But Yahweh's angel told her, "Go back {home} to your mistress and {humbly} obey her {as her servant}."

¹⁰Then the angel added, "I {Yahweh} will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all, because there will be so many of them."

¹¹Then the angel {also} told her,

"Listen, {as you know,} you are pregnant.

You will have a son,

and you are to name him Ishmael, {which means "God listens,"}

because Yahweh listened to you when you were suffering {and has helped you}.

¹²{When Ishmael grows up,} he will be {proud and free} {like} a wild donkey.

He will fight against everyone,
and everyone will fight against him.
In fact, he will {even} be hostile
toward all his relatives.”

¹³After Yahweh spoke to Hagar, she called him El Roi, {which means “the God who sees.”} {She named him that,} because she had exclaimed {to herself}, “I just now saw the back of {God who} sees me!” ¹⁴That is why the name of that well is Beer Lahai Roi, {which means “Well of the Living One, who sees me.”} It is {still} there between {the cities of} Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵Then Hagar {returned home and} gave birth to a son for Abram, and Abram named his son Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram {was} 86 years old when Hagar had Ishmael for him.

Chapter 17

More Details about God’s Agreement with Abram, including Circumcision

¹{Years} later, when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh came to him and told him, “I {am} God {who is} all-powerful. Live in a way that pleases me so that you will be blameless. ²I will establish my agreement with you, and I will increase {the number of} your descendants so that they are very numerous.”

³{When} Abram {heard that, he} bowed with his face to the ground {before God} {to show respect}, and God continued speaking to him, ⁴“Listen, this is what I will do to fulfill my agreement with you: I will make you the ancestor of many people groups. ⁵So your name will no longer be Abram. Rather, {from now on} it will be Abraham, because you will be the ancestor of many people groups. ⁶Yes, I will give you many, many descendants, so that you will become {the ancestor of many} people groups. In fact, some of your descendants will be kings. ⁷I will establish my agreement with you and {all} your descendants {who live} after you for {all} generations to come. It will be an agreement that never ends, that I will be your God and {the God} of {all} your descendants. ⁸I will also give to you and your descendants this land where you have been living as a foreigner, {yes,} the entire region of Canaan. They will own it forever, and I will be their God.”

⁹Then God continued, “Now as for your part {in this agreement}, you must obey me. {That applies to} you as well as {all} your descendants for {all} generations to come. ¹⁰This is {what I require in} my agreement with you and your descendants, which you {all} must obey: You must circumcise all males {who live} among you. ¹¹Yes, you must circumcise the foreskins of {all the males among} you, and that {custom} will remind {you all} that {I made} this agreement with you. ¹²For all {future} generations you must circumcise {every} baby boy who is eight days old, {as well as} all {other} males among your people. {That includes} males from your own family as well as those who {are} not your descendants but {are servants whom you} bought from foreigners. ¹³{Yes,} you must definitely circumcise {all of} them, {regardless of whether} they are sons from your own family or servants whom you have bought. That is how you must mark my agreement on your bodies to show that it is an agreement that never ends. ¹⁴In fact, if any man refuses to let you circumcise him, you must {send him away and} not allow him to associate with my people, {because} he has disobeyed {what I require in} my agreement.”

¹⁵God {also} told Abraham, “{As for} your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai {anymore}. Rather, {from now on} her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶I will bless her, and I will definitely enable her to bear a son for you. In fact, I will bless her so that she will {have many descendants that will} become {many} people groups, and some of her descendants will {even} be kings {who rule} over people groups.”

¹⁷{When} Abraham {heard that, he} bowed with his face to the ground {before God} {to respect him}, but he laughed {silently} and thought to himself, “How can a hundred-year-old man {like me} father a child? And how can

Sarah who is ninety years old {still} have a baby?" ¹⁸So Abraham said to God, "Please let Ishmael be the one whom you bless {as my heir}!" ¹⁹God replied, "Yes, but {it is} your wife Sarah {who} will give birth to a son for you. You must name him Isaac. He {is the one} I will establish my agreement with, as a permanent agreement {that I will also keep} with {all} his descendants {who live} after him.

²⁰"I also heard what you asked me to do for Ishmael. {So} this is what I will do: I will {also} bless him, and I will give him many children and greatly increase {the number of} his descendants. {In fact,} he will be the father of twelve {sons who become} {powerful} leaders, and I will make him {the ancestor of} a large people group. ²¹But I will establish my agreement with {your son} Isaac. Sarah will give birth to him at this time next year." ²²After he had finished talking to Abraham, God left him and ascended {to heaven}.

²³Then Abraham gathered his son Ishmael and all the {other} males who were born in his household and all {his male servants} whom he had bought, {yes,} every male in his household. Then on that same day he circumcised them, exactly as God had commanded him {to do}. ²⁴Abraham {was} 99 years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when {Abraham} circumcised him. ²⁶{So it was,} on that same day {both} Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. ²⁷And all the {other} males in Abraham's household, {including} those {who had been} born in his household as well as those {whom he had} bought {as servants} from foreigners, were also circumcised.

Chapter 18

Yahweh Promises to Abraham and Sarah That They Will Have a Son

¹Then {one day} Yahweh appeared {again} to Abraham at the oak trees on Mamre's land, while he was sitting {at} the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day. ²Abraham looked up and saw that there were three men standing a short distance away. As soon as he saw {them}, he {jumped up and} hurried {to them} to greet them. Then he bowed {before them} {with his face} to the ground {to show respect}, ³and he said {to them}, "Sirs, if you consider me worthy {to be your host}, please do not leave here without letting me serve you {as my guests}.

⁴Please let me bring {you} some water, so that you {all} can wash {the dust off} your feet, and then rest under {the shade of} this tree. ⁵Since you are here with me, let me {also} bring some food {for you} {to eat}. That way you can regain your strength before you continue on your way." They replied {to him}, "Okay, do what you have proposed."

⁶So Abraham quickly went to Sarah inside their tent and told her, "Quickly {get} three batches of our best flour and bake {some} bread." ⁷Then he ran {outside} to his herd {of cattle} and chose one of his best calves that would be good to eat. Then he took it to one of his servants, and the servant quickly butchered it and cooked it. ⁸Then Abraham brought {some} yogurt and milk and the meat that his servant had prepared, and he put it {all} before his {three} guests {to eat}. Then he stood nearby them {where they were sitting} under the tree {and served them} while they ate.

⁹Then {one of} the men asked Abraham, "Where {is} your wife Sarah?" Abraham answered, "{She is} there in the tent." ¹⁰Then the man said {to Abraham}, "I will definitely come back {here} to visit you at this time next year. When I do, your wife Sarah will have a {baby} son." Now Sarah was listening inside the entrance of the tent, which was behind the man. ¹¹She and Abraham were {already} very old, so that Sarah was {far} past the age that she could have children. ¹²So she laughed to herself {in disbelief} and said {to herself}, "It doesn't seem possible that I could experience the pleasure {of having a child} now that I am too old {to conceive}. Besides that, my husband is {also} {very} old!" ¹³But Yahweh asked Abraham, "Sarah should not have laughed and said {to herself} that she is too old to have a child! ¹⁴Nothing is too difficult for Yahweh {to do}! At the time that I have set, I will return to you {here}. {Yes, I will come} at this time next year, and Sarah will {already} have a son." ¹⁵{When Sarah heard that,} she was afraid, so she lied {to him} and said, "I did not laugh." But Yahweh replied, "That is not true. You did laugh."

Abraham Tries to Save the People of Sodom from Being Destroyed by Yahweh

¹⁶{When they had finished eating,} the {three} men got up {to leave} and started walking down toward {the city of} Sodom. Abraham escorted them {for a while} to see them on their way. ¹⁷Then Yahweh thought {to himself}, "Should I keep secret from Abraham what I am about to do {to the city of Sodom}?" ¹⁸After all, he {and his descendants} will definitely become a great and powerful people group, and through them I will bless all the people groups in the world. ¹⁹In fact, I have chosen him so that he will train his children and his descendants, so that they will live the way I want them to live and do what is right and treat people justly. Therefore I will do for him everything I have promised him {that I will do}."

²⁰So Yahweh said {to Abraham}, "I have heard that {the people of} {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah have become very evil, and they are sinning very terribly. ²¹I must go down {to those cities} now to determine whether {or not} they are guilty of everything that I have heard against them. If {they are} not {guilty}, {then} I will know {it} {and I will not punish them}."

²²Then the {other two} men left and continued walking toward {the city of} Sodom, while Abraham remained {there} with Yahweh. ²³Then Abraham stepped closer {to Yahweh} and asked {him}, "Certainly you will not destroy righteous {people} {along} with wicked {people}, will you?" ²⁴What {will you do} if there are fifty righteous {people} {living} in the city {of Sodom}? Will you really {still} destroy {all the people in} the city rather than let them all live because of the fifty righteous {people} who live there? ²⁵Certainly you would never do such a thing as kill righteous {people} {together} with evil {people}, so that you are treating them both the same way! Certainly you would never do such a thing! As the Judge over everyone on the earth, certainly you will treat people justly." ²⁶Yahweh replied {to him}, "If there are fifty righteous {people} {living} in the city of Sodom, then I will spare the whole city {and everyone who lives there} because of them."

²⁷Then Abraham spoke up {again} and asked {Yahweh}, "My Lord, please excuse me for speaking to you so boldly, even though I am {as insignificant as} dirt and ashes {compared to you}. ²⁸{But} what {will you do} if there are only forty-five righteous {people} {in the city} instead of fifty? Will you destroy the whole city {and everyone in it} if there are five people too few {who are righteous}?" Yahweh answered, "I will not destroy the city if there are forty-five {righteous people} {living} there."

²⁹Then Abraham spoke again to Yahweh and asked, "What {will you do} if there are {only} forty {righteous people} in the city? {Will you destroy it then?}" Yahweh answered, "I will not destroy {the city}, in order to save the forty {righteous people}."

³⁰Then Abraham pleaded {with him}, "My Lord, please do not be angry {with me}, but let me ask {you} {another question}: What {will you do} if there are {only} thirty {righteous people} {living} there?" He replied, "I will not destroy {the city} if there are thirty {righteous people} there."

³¹Then Abraham asked {him}, "My Lord, please excuse me for speaking to you so boldly. What {will you do} if there are {only} twenty {righteous people} {living} in the city?" Yahweh replied, "I will not destroy the city, in order to save the twenty {righteous people}."

³²Then Abraham said, "My Lord, please do not be angry {with me}, but let me ask {you} just one more thing: What {will you do} if there are {only} ten {righteous people} in the city?" Yahweh answered {him}, "I will not destroy {the city}, in order to save the ten {righteous people}." ³³When Yahweh had finished talking with Abraham, he left {him}, and Abraham returned home.

Chapter 19

Yahweh Destroys Sodom and Gomorrah

¹That evening the two angels arrived at {the city of} Sodom, while Lot was sitting at the gate of the city. When Lot saw them, he stood up and greeted them and {then} bowed {before them} with {his} face to the ground {to show respect}. ²Then he said {to them}, "Sirs, please listen {to this}: Please come to my house so that I can serve you and you can lodge for the night {there}. {That way} too {you can} wash {the dust off} your feet. Then {tomorrow morning} you can get up early and continue traveling." But the two angels replied, "Thank you, but we will {just} stay in the public square tonight." ³However Lot continued to urgently invite them until they {finally agreed and} went with him to his house. Then Lot prepared a big meal for them, including {some} flat bread, and they {sat down and} ate {the meal}.

⁴{But} {after supper,} before they could lie down {to sleep}, {all} the men in the city of Sodom surrounded Lot's house, including men of all ages. {In fact,} all the people from every part {of the city were there}. ⁵Then they shouted to Lot, "Where {are} the {two} men who came to lodge with you tonight? Bring them outside to us so that we can have relations with them!" ⁶But Lot went outside near the doorway {to talk} to them, and he closed the door {of the house} behind him. ⁷Then he pleaded {with them}, "I beg you, my friends, do not do such an evil thing!" ⁸Listen {to this} please: My two daughters have never had {marital} relations with a man. Allow me to bring them out to you {instead} so that you can do with them whatever you want. But do not harm these men, because they are my guests and I am responsible for their safety." ⁹But the men of Sodom shouted {at him}, "Get out of our way!" Then they complained {to each other}, "This guy came {here} as a foreigner, and now he thinks that he can judge {us}!" {Then they shouted at Lot,} "We will do worse things to you than {we do} to your {two} guests!" Then they started shoving hard against Lot and surged forward to break through the door {of his house}. ¹⁰But Lot's {two} guests {opened the door}, reached outside and {quickly} pulled him {back} into the house with them and closed the door. ¹¹Then those two men {who were angels} caused the men who {were at} the door of the house to be blind, including every last one of them, so that they exhausted themselves {groping around} trying to find the door.

¹²Then the {two} angels asked Lot, "Do you have any other relatives here in Sodom? {If you have} sons-in-law or sons or daughters or any {other} members of your family here, {then} {quickly} get them away from this city, ¹³because we are about to destroy it. Yahweh has heard that the people of this city are guilty of serious sins, so he has sent us to destroy the city." ¹⁴So Lot went to his {future} sons-in-law who were engaged to his daughters, and he warned them, "Hurry up {and} leave this city, because Yahweh is about to destroy it!" But his sons-in-law thought that he was joking, {so they ignored him}.

¹⁵Early the next morning, the {two} angels urged Lot, "Hurry up {and} take your wife and your two daughters {out of the city} so that you will not die when {God} punishes {the people of} the city." ¹⁶Lot hesitated, but Yahweh was being merciful to him, so the {two} men took hold of Lot's hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and led them out of the city. ¹⁷As {soon as} the angels had taken them outside {the city}, one of them said {to Lot}, "Run away from here as fast as you can! Do not look behind you, and do not delay in the valley for any reason! Go quickly to the hill country, or else you will die!" ¹⁸But Lot replied to them, "I beg you, sirs, do not {make us do that}. ¹⁹Listen {to me} please: You have treated me well even though I am unimportant, and you have been very kind to me and saved my life. But I am not able to run {all the way} to the mountains before the disaster occurs and kills me. ²⁰{So} listen {to this} please: That town up ahead {is} near {enough} to run to {in time}, and it {is} {just} a small {town}. Please let us run there, {and do not destroy it}. {After all,} it is very small. Then we can stay alive." ²¹The angel replied to Lot, "Alright, I will allow you to go to the {small} town that you're talking about, and I will not destroy it. ²²{But} hurry up {now and} run there, because I cannot destroy anything until you get there." Since Lot said the town was small, the name of the town is Zoar {which means "small"}.

²³The sun was rising over the land as Lot {and his family} reached {the town of} Zoar. ²⁴Then Yahweh caused fire and burning rocks to fall like {heavy} rain from the sky on {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵In that way, he

{completely} destroyed those {two} cities and the rest of the valley, including everyone who lived in the cities and {all} the plants in the area. ²⁶But Lot's wife, {who was} {walking} behind him, glanced back {at the city}, and {immediately} she turned into a statue of {solid} salt {rock}.

²⁷Early that same morning, Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood with Yahweh {the previous day}. ²⁸He looked down at {the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah and all {the rest of} the valley. There in front of him, he saw that {lots of thick} smoke was billowing up over the land like smoke from a {huge} fire. ²⁹When God destroyed the cities in the valley, he did not forget Abraham {or his request}. So he saved Lot from the catastrophe that he had sent to {completely} destroy the cities where Lot had been living.

Lot's Descendants from His Daughters

³⁰After that, Lot was afraid to stay in {the town of} Zoar, so he and his two daughters moved from there to the mountains, where they lived in a cave. ³¹Then {one day} {his} older {daughter} said to {his} younger {daughter}, "Our father is elderly, and there are not any men around here to marry us, which {is} the custom {that people have} everywhere else in the world. ³²{So} come on, we should get our father drunk on wine. Then we can have {sexual} relations with him so that we can continue our family line with him." ³³So that night Lot's daughters got their father drunk on wine. Then the older {daughter} went {to him} and had relations with him. But {he was so drunk that} he was not {even} aware that she got in bed {with him} or that she left.

³⁴The next day {Lot's} older {daughter} said to {his} younger {daughter}, "Listen, last night I had {sexual} relations with our father. Tonight we should get him drunk on wine again. Then you {also} should go {and} have relations with him so that we can continue our family line with him." ³⁵So that night Lot's daughters got their father drunk on wine again. Then the younger {daughter} went {to him} and had relations with him. And {once again} {he was so drunk that} he was not aware that she got in bed {with him} or that she left.

³⁶In that way, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant from {having relations with} their father. ³⁷Later his older {daughter} gave birth to a son, and she named him Moab, {which means "from my father."} He {became} the ancestor of the Moabite people {who are still living} today. ³⁸Lot's younger {daughter} also gave birth to a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi, {which means "son of my people."} He {became} the ancestor of the Ammonite people {who are still living} today.

Chapter 20

King Abimelech Takes Sarah to Be His Wife

¹Meanwhile Abraham {and his family} left from the place where they were living {and moved south} to the Negev {Desert} area. There they lived between {the cities of} Kadesh and Shur, and they stayed for a while in {the city of} Gerar. ²{While they were there,} Abraham told {people} that his wife Sarah {was} his sister. So {one day} Abimelech, {who was} the king of Gerar, had {some of his servants} bring Sarah {to his home} {to be his wife}. ³But that night God appeared to {King} Abimelech in a dream and warned him, "Listen, you are about to die because the woman whom you have taken {to be your wife} is {already} married to someone else!" ⁴However Abimelech had not {yet} slept with Sarah, so he asked {God}, "Lord, will you kill {me and} my people even if {we are} innocent?" ⁵Abraham himself told me that Sarah was his sister. And she herself also said that he was her brother. {So} I took her {to be my wife} with a pure conscience, and I did not know that I was doing anything wrong!" ⁶God replied to him in the dream, "Yes, I realize that {it was} with a pure conscience that you took Sarah {to be your wife}. In fact, I {am the one who} kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you sleep with her. ⁷Now then, you must give Abraham's wife back {to him}. He is a spokesman {for me}, so he will ask me to be merciful to you, so that you will not die. However, if you refuse to give Sarah back {to him}, you can be sure that you and all your people will definitely die!"

⁸Early the next morning {King} Abimelech got up and called together all of his officials. He told them everything that had happened, and they were very afraid {that God would punish them}. ⁹Then the king summoned Abraham and scolded him {by saying}, "You have treated us very badly! I never did anything wrong to you, and yet you have caused me and the people whom I rule to be guilty of sinning terribly! You have wronged me in ways that should never be done {to anyone}!" ¹⁰Finally, {King} Abimelech asked him, "What motivated you to do what you did?"

¹¹Abraham answered {him}, "{I did it,} because I thought that there was certainly no one in this city who revered God, so {I was afraid} they would kill me to get my wife {for themselves}. ¹²Besides that, Sarah actually {is} my half-sister. We have the same father, but different mothers, and {after we grew up,} we got married. ¹³{Years} later when God told me to leave my father's family, I asked her to do me a favor and tell people wherever we go that I {am} her brother."

¹⁴Then {King} Abimelech brought {many} sheep and cattle and male and female servants {to Abraham} and gave {them all} to him. He {also} gave Abraham's wife Sarah back to him. ¹⁵Then {King} Abimelech said {to him}, "Look, my land {is} available to you. Live {wherever} you decide {is} best." ¹⁶Then he {turned} to Sarah {and} said, "Listen, I have given 1, 000 {pieces of} silver to your brother. I'm doing this so that everyone knows you did nothing wrong, and to compensate you for everything {that has happened to you}." ¹⁷Then Abraham asked God {to be merciful to the king}. So God healed {King} Abimelech, as well as his wife and his female servants, and they were able to have children {again}. ¹⁸{Previously} Yahweh had kept all the women in Abimelech's household from conceiving because he had taken Abraham's wife Sarah.

Chapter 21

Isaac's Birth and Circumcision

¹Then Yahweh blessed Sarah {just} as he had said {he would}. Yes, he did for her {exactly} what he had promised {to do}. ²So Sarah became pregnant and at the time {God had} appointed, she gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, just as God had promised him {that she would}. ³Then Abraham named his son Isaac, {the son} whom Sarah had given birth to. ⁴Also, when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, which was exactly what God had commanded him {to do}.

⁵Abraham {was} 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. ⁶{When he was born,} Sarah exclaimed, "God has made me laugh {for joy}! Everyone who hears {about this} will laugh {for joy} with me!" ⁷She also exclaimed, "No one would have {even thought of} telling Abraham {that} I would have children. Yet I have given birth to a son {for him} when he is old!"

Sarah Has Abraham Send Hagar and Ishmael Away

⁸Isaac grew as a child and reached the age when his mother stopped nursing him. When that happened, Abraham held a big feast {to celebrate}. ⁹But {during the feast} Sarah noticed that {Ishmael,} the son of {her} Egyptian {handmaid} Hagar and Abraham, was making fun of {Isaac}. ¹⁰So she {was angry and} told Abraham, "Get rid of that servant woman and her son! Her son must never share {any part of} what my son Isaac inherits {from you}!"

¹¹Abraham was very upset about that, because {Ishmael} was {also} his son {and he cared about him too}. ¹²But God told him, "Do not be upset about the boy or your servant woman. {Rather,} listen to everything Sarah tells you {to do}, {and do it,} because Isaac is the one who will be the ancestor of your descendants {whom I promised to you}. ¹³But I will also make your servant woman's son become {the ancestor of} a {large} people group, because he is your son."

¹⁴Early the next morning Abraham got up, brought {some} food and a leather container {full} of water to Hagar {and} put them on her back. Then he sent her off with the boy, and they left and wandered {around} in the desert near {the city of} Beersheba. ¹⁵When they had finished {all} the water in the container, she left her son under {the

shade of} a bush. ¹⁶She thought {to herself}, "I cannot {bear to} watch my son die." So she went {away from him} and sat down by herself, about as far away as someone can shoot an arrow. Then she started crying loudly.

¹⁷God {also} heard the boy crying, so one of his angels called to Hagar from heaven and said, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid. God has heard the boy crying over there {and will take care of him}. ¹⁸{So} go help the boy to get up, and take care of him, because I {Yahweh} will make him become {the ancestor of} a large people group."

¹⁹Then God enabled Hagar to see a water well. So she went over {to the well}, filled her {water} container {with} water, and gave her son some water to drink.

²⁰As the boy grew up, God was with him {and helped him}. He lived in the {Paran} Desert and learned to hunt skillfully with a bow {and arrows}. ²¹While he was there, his mother found a wife for him {who was} from the country of Egypt.

King Abimelech Makes a Treaty with Abraham

²²Meanwhile, one day {King} Abimelech {came} with his army captain Phicol to Abraham {and} said to him, "{I have noticed that} God {is} with you {and helps you} in everything that you do. ²³Now then, {please} vow to me here in God's presence that you will never {again} deceive me or my children or my descendants. {Instead,} just as I have treated you kindly, {vow that} you will {also} be kind to me and {my people in} this country where you are living."

²⁴Abraham replied {to him}, "I vow {that I will do those things}."

²⁵Then Abraham {also} confronted {King} Abimelech about a water well that Abimelech's servants had taken control of {from Abraham's servants}. ²⁶But Abimelech responded, "I have no idea who did that. Besides that, you did not tell me {about it} {before}, and so today is the first that I have heard about it."

²⁷Then Abraham gave {some of his} sheep and cattle to Abimelech, and he and Abimelech made a {peace} treaty {with one another}. ²⁸Abraham {also} separated seven female lambs from the rest of the flock. ²⁹So Abimelech asked him, "Why did you separate those seven lambs {from the rest of the flock}?" ³⁰Abraham replied, "Because I want you to accept them from me, to show {everyone} that you agree with me that I dug this well {and it belongs to me}." ³¹{Abimelech accepted the lambs,} so Abraham named that place Beersheba, {which means "Well of the Seven" or "Well of the Vow,"} because that's where they both vowed {to live at peace with one another}.

³²After Abraham and {King} Abimelech made their {peace} treaty at Beersheba, Abimelech and his army captain Phicol left {from there} and went back to {their homes in} the Philistines' territory {that Abimelech ruled over}.

³³Then Abraham planted an {evergreen} tree {named} tamarisk at {the place called} Beersheba, and there he worshiped Yahweh, {who is} the God who lives forever. ³⁴After that, Abraham lived {there} in the Philistines' territory for many years.

Chapter 22

God Tests Abraham's Trust in Him

¹Sometime later God {decided to} test Abraham. So he called to him, "Abraham!" Abraham replied, "Yes, {Lord}?"

²Then God commanded {him}, "Take your son {with you}, {yes,} your only son Isaac whom you love, and travel {with him} to the region of Moriah. There you are to burn him up {on an altar} as a sacrifice {to me}, on one of the mountains that I will show to you."

³So the next morning Abraham got up early and put a {pack} saddle on his donkey {to get it ready} {for the trip}. Then he got his son Isaac and two of his servants, and they chopped {some} {fire}wood that they would use to burn the sacrifice {and loaded it on the donkey}. Then they started traveling to the place that God had told Abraham {to go to}. ⁴Three days later Abraham looked {ahead} and in the distance he could see the mountain

{where they were headed}. ⁵Then he told his servants, "You {two} stay here with the donkey, while my son and I go {to the mountain} over there and worship {God}. Then we will come back to you."

⁶Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering {off the donkey} and loaded {it} on his son Isaac's shoulder {to carry}. He {himself} carried a fire {pot} {with hot coals in it} and a knife {to kill the sacrifice}. Then the two of them walked on together. ⁷{As they walked,} Isaac said to Abraham, "Father?" Abraham replied, "Yes, my son?" Then Isaac asked {him}, "I see {that we have} the fire {coals} and the {fire}wood, but where {is} the lamb that {we} will burn as a sacrifice {to God}?" ⁸Abraham answered {him}, "My son, God himself will provide a lamb for us to burn as a sacrifice {to him}." Then they continued walking together {toward the mountain}.

⁹When they reached the place that God had told him {to go to}, Abraham built a {stone} altar there and put the wood {on top of it}. Then he tied his son Isaac's arms and legs {with rope} and laid him on top of the wood on the altar. ¹⁰Then he picked up the knife {in order} to kill his son. ¹¹But one of Yahweh's angels called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" And he replied, "Yes, {Lord}?" ¹²Then the angel told {him}, "Do not harm your son or do anything {else} to him. Now I know that you revere me, since you {obeyed me and} did not refuse to sacrifice your son to me, {even though he is} your only son."

¹³Then Abraham looked around and there behind {him} he saw a ram that had its horns stuck in a bush. So he {released Isaac,} went {over to the ram} and untangled it. {Then he killed it} and burned it {on the altar} as a sacrifice {to God} in place of his son. ¹⁴That is why Abraham named that place Yahweh-Yireh, {which means "Yahweh will provide"}. {Even} today people {still} say, "On Yahweh's mountain he will provide what you need."

¹⁵Then Yahweh's angel called to Abraham from heaven again. ¹⁶He said, "This is what Yahweh declares {to you}: 'With myself {as my own witness}, I vow {to you} that since you have obeyed me and did not hold back your son {from me}, {yes,} your only son, ¹⁷I will abundantly bless you. In fact, I will give you so many descendants {that they will be} {as numerous} as the stars in the sky and {as numerous} as the {grains of} sand on the seashore. They will defeat their enemies and rule over them. ¹⁸Through your descendants {I} will bless all the people groups on the earth. {I will do that} because you obeyed me.'"

¹⁹After that, Abraham returned {with Isaac} to his {two} servants. Then together they {all} traveled {back} {home} to {the city of} Beersheba, and Abraham {and his family} stayed there.

Abraham's Brother Nahor's Twelve Sons

²⁰Sometime later someone told Abraham, "I have news {for you}: Your brother Nahor and {his wife} Milcah also have {some} sons, ²¹The oldest son {is} Uz, {the second is} Buz, and {the third is} Kemuel, {who is} the father of Aram. ²²{They also have sons named} Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." ²³Bethuel had {a daughter named} Rebekah. Those {are} the eight {sons} {that} Milcah had for Abraham's brother Nahor. ²⁴Besides that, Nahor and his servant-wife Reumah also had {some sons, including} Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Chapter 23

Sarah Dies and Abraham Buys Some Land to Bury Her Body

¹Sarah lived to be 127 years old. That is how old she was ²when she died in {the city of} Kiriath Arba, which is {now called} Hebron, in the region of Canaan. Abraham went {to her} and cried and mourned for her. ³Later he stood up from {mourning} beside her and {went} to {the leaders of} the Hittites {at the city gates} and said to them, ⁴"{As you know,} I {am} a foreigner who is living among you {so I do not own any property here}. {Please} sell me some of your land so I have a place to bury {the body of} my wife who has died." ⁵{The leaders of} the Hittites responded to Abraham, ⁶"Sir, {please} listen to what we propose: You are a powerful man {living} among us. {So} {you may}

bury {the body of} your wife who has died in {any} one of our best burial sites. All of us are willing for you to use {any of} our burial sites to bury her."

⁷Abraham stood up and bowed {in respect} in front of {the leaders of} the Hittites, who owned the land {in the area}. ⁸Then he said to them, "If you are willing {for me} to bury my deceased {wife} {here}, {please} help me by asking Ephron the son of Zohar ⁹to sell me his cave that is at the edge of his field in the Machpelah {area}. Ask him to sell it to me for its full price, with {all of} you {here} to witness {the sale}. That way I will have a place where I can bury {my wife who has died}." ¹⁰Now Ephron the Hittite was sitting {there at the meeting} among the {other} Hittite leaders, so he replied to Abraham as the {other} leaders listened, including everyone who had gathered {there} at the city gate. He said, ¹¹"That's not necessary, sir. {Please} accept this offer: I {hereby} give you the {entire} field, including the cave that {is} in it. I am giving it to you {now} as the leaders of my people watch. {You may} bury your deceased {wife} {there}."

¹²Then Abraham bowed {again} before the leaders who owned the land {in the area}. ¹³As they listened, he said to Ephron, "Rather {than that}, since you are willing {to let me have the field}, please accept my offer. I want to pay {you} the {full} price for the field. {Please} let me buy it from you, so that {it will be mine and} I can bury {my wife} there who has died." ¹⁴Ephron responded to Abraham, ¹⁵"Sir, {please} listen to me. The land {is worth} 400 shekels of silver. {However} since you and I are friends, there is no need for that. {Go ahead and} bury your deceased {wife} {there}." ¹⁶Abraham agreed with Ephron's price, and he paid Ephron the {amount of} silver that he had suggested while {the rest of} the Hittites listened. {Abraham weighed the} 400 shekels of silver using the standard weights that sellers used {at that time}.

¹⁷So Ephron sold his field {to Abraham}, including the cave that {was} in the field, as well as all the trees that {were} inside its boundaries. The field was in the Machpelah {area} near {the city of} Mamre. {Ephron sold that field} ¹⁸to Abraham, and it became his property while the Hittites watched, including everyone who had gathered at the city gate. ¹⁹After that, Abraham put {the body of} his wife Sarah in the cave in that field in the Machpelah {area} east of {the city of} Mamre, that is, Hebron, in the region of Canaan. ²⁰So {that is how} that field, including the cave that {was} in the field, was {officially} sold to Abraham by the Hittites, so that he had a place where he could bury {his wife who had died}.

Chapter 24

Abraham Finds a Wife for Isaac

¹Abraham had lived a long time and was {now} {very} old, and Yahweh had blessed him in every way. ²{One day} Abraham said to his chief household servant, who managed his entire estate for him, "Please put your hand under my thigh {to show that you will do what I ask}. ³I want you to vow {to me}, with Yahweh the God who rules the heavens and the earth as your witness, that you will not arrange for my son {Isaac} to marry {any of} the Canaanite women who live around us here. ⁴Rather, you must go to the country where I grew up, to my relatives {who live there}, and find a wife for him {from there}."

⁵But {Abraham's} servant asked him, "What {should I do} if the {young} woman {I find} refuses to come {back} with me to this land {to live}? Do you want me to take your son back {there} to your home country {to marry her} {and live there}?" ⁶Abraham answered him, "{No,} be sure that you never take my son back there {to live}, ⁷{because} Yahweh, the God who rules the heavens, brought me {here} from my father's household and from the land where {the rest of} my relatives live, and he vowed to me that he will give this land to my descendants. He will send one of his angels ahead of you {to help you}, so that you will find a woman from my home land for my son {to marry}.

⁸But if the woman {you find} refuses to come back {here} with you, then you will be free from {keeping} this vow that you are making to me {now}. But {no matter what happens,} never take my son back to my home country!"

⁹So {Abraham's} servant put his hand under his master's thigh and vowed to him that he would do what Abraham had requested him to do. ¹⁰Then he got ten of his master's camels ready {for the trip}, and after he loaded them

with all kinds of valuable things from his master {to use as gifts}, he left {with some other servants} and made the {long} trip to {the region of} Aram Naharaim, to the city where Nahor lived. ¹¹{When they arrived there,} Abraham's servant had the camels kneel down {to rest} outside the city near the well {that was there}. It was evening time, when the {young} women {of the city} were starting to come out {to the well} to draw water.

¹²Then Abraham's servant prayed, "{Dear} Yahweh, {who is} the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham, please help me succeed today and {in that way} be kind to my master. ¹³As you see, I am standing by this well, and young women from the city are coming {here} to draw water. ¹⁴{Please} make it happen {that} when I say to one of the young women, 'Please lower your jug so that I can have a drink,' she will say {to me}, 'Have a drink and I will also draw water for your camels.' {Then I will know that} she {is the one} you have chosen to be the wife of Isaac who serves you, and that you have been kind to my master."

¹⁵Before Abraham's servant had {even} finished praying, he saw {a young woman named} Rebekah coming out {of the city} carrying a water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, {who was} the son of Milcah and Abraham's brother Nahor. ¹⁶She was a very beautiful unmarried young woman, who had never had {marital} relations with a man. She walked down to the well, filled her jug {with water} and came {back} up {carrying it on her shoulder}.

¹⁷Then {Abraham's} servant ran to meet her and said {to her}, "Please let me have a little water to drink from your jug." ¹⁸She replied, "{Please} have a drink, sir." Then she quickly lowered her jug {from her shoulder} to her hands and let him drink {some water} {from it}. ¹⁹After that, she said {to him}, "I will also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰Then she quickly emptied {the rest of the water from} her jug into the {animal drinking} trough {that was there} and ran back {and forth} to the well to draw {more water}, until she had drawn {enough} for all of the camels. ²¹Meanwhile {Abraham's} servant silently watched Rebekah {and waited} to find out whether or not Yahweh had made him successful on his journey {to find a wife for Isaac}.

²²Finally, when the camels had finished drinking, the servant {gave Rebekah} a gold nose ring that weighed one beka, and two gold bracelets for her wrists that weighed ten shekels {each}. ²³Then he asked {her}, "Please tell me who your father {is}. {Also,} is there room at his house for me and my men to spend the night {there}?" ²⁴Rebekah answered him, "My father {is} Bethuel, {and he is} one of Nahor and Milcah's sons." ²⁵Then she added, "We have plenty of both straw and {other} feed {at our house} {for the camels to eat}, {and there is} also {enough} room {for you all} to stay {there} tonight." ²⁶Then the servant bowed to the ground and worshiped Yahweh, ²⁷by saying, "Praise Yahweh, the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham! He has never stopped being kind and faithful to my master, and he has guided me on {my} journey {here} {to} the home of my master's relatives!"

²⁸Then Rebekah hurried {home} and told her mother's family about what had happened. ²⁹Rebekah had a brother whose name {was} Laban, and he rushed out to the well where Abraham's servant was. ³⁰As soon as Laban had seen the nose ring {that his sister was wearing} and the bracelets on her arms and had heard her announce what the servant had said to her, he went {out} to meet him. He found him standing with {his} camels at the well. ³¹Then Laban said {to him}, "Come {with me}, you whom Yahweh has blessed. There is no need for you to stand out here. I have gotten our house ready {for you and your men to stay with us} and {there is also} a place for {your} camels {to stay}."

³²So Abraham's servant went home {with Laban}. {When they arrived there,} Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and {other} feed to them {to eat}. {He} also {gave} water {to the servant} and the men who {were} with him to wash their feet. ³³Then {Laban's family} served them a meal to eat, but the servant said {to them}, "Before I can eat, I need to tell {you} why I am here." Laban responded {to him}, "{Please} tell {us} {what you have to say}."

³⁴So the servant told {them}, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵Yahweh has abundantly blessed my master, so that he has become wealthy. Yahweh has given him {many} sheep and cattle, {much} silver and gold, {many} male and female servants, and {many} camels and donkeys. ³⁶Besides that, my master's wife Sarah gave birth to a son for him when she was old, and my master has given him everything that he owns. ³⁷{Before I came here,} my master made me vow {to do something for him}. He said, 'You must not arrange for my son {Isaac} to marry {any of} the Canaanite

women whose land we have been living in. ³⁸Rather, go to my father's family, to my {own} relatives, and find a wife for my son {from among them}.' ³⁹So I asked my master, 'What {should I do} if the {young} woman {I find} refuses to come {back} {here} with me?' ⁴⁰He answered me, 'Yahweh whom I serve will send one of his angels with you. He will make you succeed on your journey, so that you will find a wife for my son from {among} my relatives, {someone} from my father's family. ⁴¹At that time you will be free from {keeping} the vow {you are making} to me: If you find a wife for Isaac but my family refuses to let her go with you, then you will be free from {keeping} your vow to me.'

⁴²"Then today when I came to {your city's} well, I prayed, '{Dear} Yahweh, {who is} the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham, if you are willing, please give me success on this journey that I have made. ⁴³As you see, I am standing {here} near {this} well. {Please} make it happen {that} when a young woman comes out {of the city} to draw water and I ask her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jug," ⁴⁴if she replies, "{Yes,} have a drink and I will also draw water for your camels," {then} {let} her {be} the woman whom {you} Yahweh have chosen to be the wife of my master's son.'

⁴⁵"Before I had {even} finished praying quietly, suddenly I saw Rebekah coming out {of the city} carrying her {empty} {water} jug on her shoulder. She walked down to the well and filled her jug with water, so I asked her, 'May I please have a drink {of water}?' ⁴⁶She quickly lowered her jug from her {shoulder} and said, 'Have a drink, and I will also draw water for your camels.' So I took a drink {from her jug}, and she also gave water to my camels. ⁴⁷Then I asked her, 'Who {is} your father?' She answered, 'My father is Bethuel, {who is} one of Nahor and Milcah's sons.' After that I gave her a nose ring and bracelets to wear. ⁴⁸Then I bowed {to the ground} and worshiped and praised Yahweh, the God {who takes care} of my master Abraham, because he guided me right where I should go to find the granddaughter of my master's brother {to be the wife} for my master's son. ⁴⁹So now, {please} tell me whether or not you are willing to be kind and faithful to my master {by letting her come with me}, so that I can decide what to do {next}."

⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel answered {Abraham's servant}, "{It is clear that} Yahweh has made {all} this happen, {so} it is not our place to tell you anything different. ⁵¹Look, here {is} Rebekah. Take {her with you} and return {home} so that she can marry your master's son as Yahweh has guided." ⁵²When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed to the ground {and thanked} Yahweh. ⁵³Then he took out {expensive gifts, including} silver and gold jewelry, and {also} {beautiful} clothing, and gave {them} to Rebekah. He {also} gave {valuable} gifts to her brother and mother.

⁵⁴Then Abraham's servant and his men ate {supper} and slept {there} that night. {Early} the next morning after everyone got up, Abraham's servant said {to Rebekah's family}, "{Please} let me return {home} {now} to my master." ⁵⁵But Rebekah's brother and her mother replied, "{Please} let the young woman stay {here} with us {for another} ten days or so. Then you can go and take her {with you}." ⁵⁶But the servant said to them, "{Please} do not delay me. Now that Yahweh has made my journey successful, let me go so that I can return to my master." ⁵⁷So they replied, "Let's call Rebekah and ask her what she wants to do."

⁵⁸So they called for her and asked her, "Do you want to go {now} with this man?" She answered {them}, "{Yes,} I will go {now}." ⁵⁹So they {agreed to} send their sister Rebekah and her {personal} servant {who had helped raise her}, with Abraham's servant and his companions. ⁶⁰They blessed Rebekah by saying to her,

"Sister, we pray that God will give you
countless thousands {of descendants},
and that he will help them conquer

{all} their enemies and rule over them!" ⁶¹After Rebekah and her servants {who were going with her} packed their things, they got up on the camels {they were going to ride} and went with Abraham's servant. So {Abraham's} servant took Rebekah {with him} and started the journey {back} {home}.

⁶²Meanwhile Isaac returned {home} from visiting {the place called} Beer Lahai Roi. {At that time} he was living in the Negev {Wilderness}. ⁶³{One day} as it was becoming evening, he went to the field to pray. {As he was praying,} he looked up and suddenly he saw {in the distance} {some} camels coming {toward him}. ⁶⁴Rebekah {also} looked up and saw Isaac. Immediately she got down from the camel {that she was riding}, ⁶⁵and asked {Abraham's} servant, "Who is that man in the field who is walking {this way} to greet us?" The servant answered {her}, "He {is} my master {Isaac}." So she covered her face with a veil {to show modesty}.

⁶⁶Then the servant told Isaac everything that he had done {on the journey}. ⁶⁷Then Isaac took Rebekah into the tent where his mother Sarah had lived, and he married her, so that she became his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was happy again after {mourning for} his mother {who had died}.

Chapter 25

Abraham and Keturah's Descendants

¹Then Abraham got married again, and his wife's name {was} Keturah. ²She had sons with him {whom they named} Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³{Her son} Jokshan had {sons named} Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants became {people groups named} the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. ⁴{Keturah's son} Midian had sons {named} Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All of those {were} Keturah's descendants {whom she had with Abraham}.

⁵Abraham gave everything that he owned to Isaac. ⁶He also gave {valuable} gifts to the sons that his servant wives had {with him}, but after that he made them move away to the east country {so that they would live} far away from his son Isaac.

Abraham Dies and Is Buried

⁷Abraham lived to be 175 years old. ⁸Then he took his last breath and died at a very old age. After he had lived a long and satisfying life, he joined his ancestors {who had already died}. ⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael put his body in the cave of Machpelah {which was} in the field that had belonged to Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of {the city of} Mamre. ¹⁰{That is} the {same} field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites. That is {the cave} where his sons buried his body next to {the body of} his wife Sarah {whom he had buried there before}. ¹¹After Abraham died, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near {the well} Beer Lahai Roi.

Ishmael's Descendants

¹²What follows {is} a record of the descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael, the son Abraham had with Sarah's Egyptian slave woman Hagar. ¹³Here is {a list of} the names of Ishmael's sons, {given} in the order that they were born: His oldest {son} {was} Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedermah. ¹⁶Those were Ishmael's {twelve} sons, who became the leaders of twelve tribes that were named after them, and each tribe lived in its {own} towns and villages. ¹⁷Ishmael lived a total of 137 years. Then he took his last breath and died, and he joined his ancestors {who had died before him}. ¹⁸His descendants lived {throughout the area that extended} from {the region of} Havilah to {the wilderness of} Shur that {is} east of {the country of} Egypt as you head {from there} to {the city of} Asshur. They lived as enemies against all their relatives.

The Birth of Isaac's Twin Sons Jacob and Esau

¹⁹Here {is} {more of} the history about Abraham's son Isaac and his descendants: {After} Abraham had Isaac,

²⁰Isaac {grew up and} married Rebekah when he was forty years old. {She was} a daughter of Bethuel, {who was}

an Aramean from {the region of} Paddan Aram, and her brother was Laban {who was also} an Aramean. ²¹However {for many years} Rebekah was not able to become pregnant, so Isaac prayed that Yahweh would give her children. Yahweh did what Isaac prayed for, so that she became pregnant {with twins}. ²²But the {two} babies wrestled with each other inside her, so she asked, "Why is this happening to me?" Then she asked Yahweh about it. ²³Yahweh answered her,

"{The ancestors of} two {future} people groups {are} inside you.

They will be enemies {starting now} even before they are born.

One of them will be more powerful than the other,

so that the older {son's descendants} will serve the younger {son's descendants}."

²⁴Later when it was time {for Rebekah} to give birth, sure enough, {there were} twin boys inside her! ²⁵The first {one} who was born was completely covered with thick red hair. So his parents named him Esau, {which means "hairy."} ²⁶Next his brother was born, with his hand grabbing on {tightly} to Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob, {which means "heel-grabber."} Isaac {was} sixty years old when Esau and Jacob were born.

Esau Sells His Rights as the Firstborn Son to Jacob

²⁷When the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled hunter and he enjoyed {being} in the open country, but Jacob had a quiet personality and {preferred} to work at home. ²⁸Isaac's favorite son was Esau, because he liked to eat the meat of wild animals {that Esau hunted}, whereas Rebekah's favorite son was Jacob.

²⁹{One day} when Jacob was making {some} soup, Esau came home from {hunting out in} the open country and he {felt} weak {and hungry}. ³⁰So Esau requested from Jacob, "Please let me have some of that very red soup because I {feel} weak {and hungry}!" That is why Esau's nickname was Edom, {which means "red."} ³¹But Jacob replied, "First trade your rights as the oldest son to me {for the soup,} {then I will give you some}." ³²Esau responded, "Look, I am about to die {from hunger}! So my birthright is of no use to me {right now}." ³³Jacob insisted, "{First} make a vow to me today {before God} {that your rights are now mine}!" So Esau vowed to Jacob that he had traded his rights as the oldest son to him {for the soup}. ³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau {some of} the lentil soup with {some} bread, and Esau {quickly} ate the meal and left. In that way, Esau treated his birthright {carelessly} as if it had no value.

Chapter 26

God Establishes His Covenant with Isaac

¹Now there was {another} severe food shortage in the region. {This was} a different shortage from the one that had happened {years} before, while Abraham was still alive. So Isaac {and his family} went to {the city of} Gerar to {ask for help from} King Abimelech, who ruled over the Philistines. ²Then Yahweh appeared to Isaac and commanded {him}, "Do not go to {the country of} Egypt, {rather} stay in this land where I tell you {to live}. ³Live {as a foreigner} in this region, and I will stay with you and prosper you. In fact, I will give all the {surrounding} regions to you and your descendants, and I will continue {to keep} the vow that I made to your father Abraham ⁴that I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. I will also give them all these regions. In fact, through your descendants {I} will bless all the people groups on the earth. ⁵{I will do all that} because Abraham obeyed me and did everything that I ever commanded {him} {to do}."

Isaac Lies about His Wife Rebekah to the Philistines

⁶Then Isaac {did what God said and} settled {with his family} in {the city of} Gerar. ⁷Now Rebekah {was} very beautiful, so the men in that city started asking {Isaac} about her. Isaac was afraid they might kill him in order to

have her, so he {lied and} told {them} she {was} his sister. ⁸{One day} after Isaac had lived there a long time, the Philistines' King Abimelech looked down from a window {of his palace} and saw to his surprise that Isaac was showing affection to his wife Rebekah. ⁹So Abimelech summoned Isaac and scolded {him}, "It is obvious that Rebekah {is} actually your wife! So why did you tell us that she {is} your sister?" Isaac answered him, "{I said that} because I thought someone might kill me in order to have her {as a wife}." ¹⁰Then Abimelech scolded {him} {further}, "You have treated us very badly! Sooner or later, one of my men could have slept with your wife, and you would have caused us to be guilty {of adultery}!" ¹¹Then {King} Abimelech warned all {his} people, "I will definitely execute anyone who harms Isaac or his wife!"

Isaac Has Conflict with the Philistines over His Wells

¹²Isaac planted crops in that area, and that year he gathered {a huge harvest that was} a hundred times {more than what he had planted}. Yahweh continued to bless him, ¹³so that he became richer and richer until he was extremely wealthy. ¹⁴He owned many sheep and cattle and {he also owned} many servants. As a result, the Philistines were jealous of Isaac. ¹⁵So they filled up with dirt all the wells that the servants of his father Abraham had dug while he was {still} alive.

¹⁶Then {King} Abimelech said to Isaac, "{Please} move away from us, because you are so powerful {that you are a threat} to us." ¹⁷So Isaac moved from {the city of} Gerar and pitched his tents in the Gerar Valley and stayed there {for a while}. ¹⁸Then Isaac {had his servants} dig the dirt out of the wells that Abraham's servants had dug and {that} the Philistines had {just} filled {with dirt}. He gave the wells the same names that his father had given them.

¹⁹Next Isaac's servants dug {at a new place} in the valley and discovered a source of fresh water there. ²⁰But the herdsmen from {the city of} Gerar argued with Isaac's herdsmen and said, "That well is ours!" So Isaac named the well Esek, {which means "argument,"} because they argued with him {about it}. ²¹Then Isaac's servants dug another well, but Gerar's herdsmen argued {with them} about that one too, so Isaac named it Sitnah, {which means "hostility."} ²²Then Isaac {and his family} moved from there and he {had his servants} dig a third well. {This time} Gerar's herdsmen did not argue about it, so he named it Rehoboth, {which means "space,"} because he said, "Finally Yahweh has provided space for us, so that we will prosper in the land."

²³From there Isaac {and his family} went south to {the city of} Beersheba. ²⁴That night Yahweh appeared to him and said {to him}, "I {am} the God whom your father Abraham serves. Do not be afraid, because I {will always be} with you. I will bless you and make your descendants numerous, just as {I promised} to Abraham, who serves me." ²⁵So Isaac built an altar there {at Beersheba} and worshiped Yahweh by name. He also set up his tents there, and his servants started digging {another} well there {too}.

²⁶Then {King} Abimelech went to Isaac from {the city of} Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and his army commander Phicol. ²⁷Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, {especially} since you have been hostile toward me and forced me to move away from you?" ²⁸They answered {him}, "It is very obvious to us that Yahweh is with you {and blessing you}, and we decided that we should make a vow with you {to live in peace with one another}. So {please} let us make a {peace} treaty with you, ²⁹that you will never harm us, just as we never harmed you, but only treated you well and sent you away in peace. {As a result,} Yahweh has now blessed you." ³⁰Then Isaac prepared a feast, and they {all} ate and drank {together}. ³¹Early the next morning they got up and made vows to one another {that they would keep their treaty}. Then Isaac said goodbye to them, and they went home from him in peace.

³²That {same} day Isaac's servants came to inform him about the well that they had been digging and announced, "We have struck water!" ³³So Isaac named the well Shebah, {which means "vow."} That is why {even} today the name of that city {is} still Beersheba, {which means "well of the vow."}

Esau's Foreign Wives

³⁴When Esau was forty years old, he married {two} Hittite women: Judith, whose father was Beerli, and Basemath, whose father was Elon. ³⁵Isaac and Rebekah were very distressed that their son had married foreign women {rather than a woman from their own religion and people group}.

Chapter 27

Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing from Their Father Isaac

¹One day when Isaac was an old man and he could no longer see, he sent for his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." Esau answered him, "Yes, {sir}?" ²Then Isaac told {him}, "Please listen {closely}: I am an old man {now} {and} I do not know when I will die. ³So then, get your bow and arrows, go out in the open country and hunt {some} deer {meat} for me. ⁴Next {use the meat to} cook a delicious meal for me the way that I like it, and bring it to me to eat so that I can bless you before I die."

⁵Rebekah overheard what Isaac said to his son Esau. So after Esau had gone out to the open country to hunt, ⁶she said to her son Jacob, "Listen, I {just} overheard your father tell your brother Esau ⁷to get him {some} deer {meat} and {use it to} cook a delicious meal for him to eat. Then before he dies, he wants to bless Esau with Yahweh as his witness. ⁸So then, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you {to do}. ⁹Please go {out} to our flock {of goats} and get for me two of the best young goats. I will {use the meat from them to} cook a delicious meal for your father, {just} the way that he likes it. ¹⁰Then you can take the meal to your father to eat, so that he will bless you before he dies."

¹¹But Jacob responded to his mother, "As you know, my brother Esau has hairy skin, but I have smooth skin. ¹²What if my father feels my skin? He will {recognize me and} realize that I am trying to deceive him. Then he will curse me instead of blessing me." ¹³But his mother replied, "{If that happens,} may God curse me instead of you, my son. Just listen to me, and go get {two goats} for me!" ¹⁴So Jacob went {to the flock} and selected {two goats} and took {them} to her. Then she cooked a delicious meal the way that his father liked it. ¹⁵She also got her older son Esau's finest clothes that she had in the house and had her younger son Jacob put them on. ¹⁶And she used the goat skins to cover Jacob's arms and the part of his neck that had no hair {on it}.

¹⁷Then she handed the delicious meal to Jacob, including some bread that she had baked. ¹⁸He took the meal to his father and said, "Father." His father answered, "Yes? Which of my sons {are} you?" ¹⁹Jacob replied to his father, "I am Esau, your oldest son. I have done what you requested me {to do}. {So now} please sit up and eat some of the deer {meat} that I have cooked {for you}, so that you can bless me." ²⁰But Isaac asked him, "How were you able to find {the deer} so quickly, my son?" Jacob answered, "Yahweh, {who is} the God who takes care of you, helped me to succeed."

²¹Then Isaac said to him, "My son, please come here so that I can feel you and make sure that you are really my son Esau." ²²So Jacob stepped closer to his father Isaac, and his father felt him and thought {to himself}, "{Hmm,} his voice {sounds like} Jacob's voice, but {his} arms {feel like} Esau's arms." ²³So Isaac was not able to identify who Jacob was because his arms felt hairy like his brother Esau's. Isaac was about to bless Jacob, ²⁴but {first} {he wanted to be completely sure, so} he asked {him}, "Are you really my son Esau?" Jacob answered, "{Yes,} I am." ²⁵So Isaac said {to him}, "Serve me {the meal} so that I can eat some of your deer meat and bless you." Then Jacob served {the meal} to his father and he ate {it}. Jacob also served him wine and he drank {it}.

²⁶Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come here and kiss me, my son." ²⁷So Jacob went over {to his father} and kissed him {on the cheeks}. {As he did that,} his father recognized the fragrance of Esau's clothes, so he blessed him and said,

"Ahh, my son, you smell {wonderful}

like the fragrance of a field

that Yahweh has caused to flourish!

²⁸I ask God to provide you {and your descendants} {plenty of} rain from the sky {for your crops and animals}

and riches from the earth,

including abundant harvests and {much} wine.

²⁹I also ask God to cause nations to serve

and honor you {and your descendants}.

You will rule over your brother's descendants,

and they will {submit to you and} bow down to you.

Whoever curses you {God} will curse,

but whoever blesses you {he} will bless."

Esau Gets "Blessed" Too by His Father Isaac

³⁰As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and right after Jacob had left his father's presence, Jacob's brother Esau returned {home} from hunting. ³¹Then he too cooked a delicious meal, and he took {it} to his father {Isaac} and said to him, "Father, {please} sit up and eat some of your son's deer meat so that you can bless me." ³²But his father asked him, "Which son {are} you?" Esau answered, "I {am} your oldest son Esau." ³³Then Isaac {became so upset that his body} shook very violently, and he asked {Esau}, "Who {was} it then that hunted deer meat and brought a meal to me? I finished eating it just before you came, and I blessed him. So God will definitely bless him."

³⁴When Esau heard what his father said, he shouted out with a very loud and distressed shout and begged his father, "{Please} bless me too, father!" ³⁵But his father responded, "Your brother came {to me} and tricked {me} and stole the blessing that I was planning to give you." ³⁶Then Esau exclaimed, "The name Jacob fits him exactly, because he has tricked me like this two times {now}! {First} he stole my rights as the oldest son, and now look {what he has done}: he has stolen my blessing!"

Then Esau begged {his father}, "Is there still a way you can {ask God to} bless me?" ³⁷Isaac answered, "Listen, I have {already} appointed Jacob to be your master. In fact, I have asked {God to make it so} that you and all your descendants will serve him {and his descendants}. Besides that, I have {also} blessed him with {abundant} harvests and wine. So then, there is no way left for me to bless you, my son!" ³⁸But Esau continued to beg his father {and say}, "Father, isn't there {just} one more way that you can bless {me}? {Please} bless me too, father!" Then Esau started crying loudly. ³⁹Finally his father said to him,

"Listen, you {and your descendants} will live

in a place where the land is not good {for farming}

and where there is not much rain.

⁴⁰You {and your descendants} will have to fight battles to stay alive,

and you will serve your brother {and his descendants}.

But when you rebel {against them},

you will get free from their control over you."

Jacob Flees from Esau

⁴¹After that Esau held a grudge against Jacob because their father had blessed him. So Esau thought to himself, "Soon my father will die; then after we {bury him and} mourn for him, I will kill my brother Jacob." ⁴²But Rebekah heard about what her oldest son Esau was planning, so she sent for her youngest son Jacob and told him, "Listen, your brother Esau is planning to take revenge on you and kill you. ⁴³So then, my son, listen to me: Hurry {and} escape to {the city of} Haran to my brother Laban! ⁴⁴Live with him for a short time until your brother is no longer angry {with you}. ⁴⁵When he is not angry with you anymore and he forgets what you did to him, I will send word that it is safe for you to come {back home} from there. I do not want to lose both of you {on} the same day!"

⁴⁶Then Rebekah complained to Isaac, "My life is {very} miserable because of our Hittite daughters-in-law {whom Esau married}! If Jacob were to {also} marry a local Hittite woman like that, I would not want to keep on living!"

Chapter 28

¹So Isaac summoned Jacob, blessed him and told him, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman. ²{Instead} you must go right away to {the region of} Paddan Aram, to the home of your mother's father, Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban's daughters. ³I pray that God, {who is} all-powerful, will bless you and give you many children and increase {the number of} your descendants, so that you become {the ancestor of} many people groups. ⁴I {also} pray that he will bless you and your descendants the same way that he blessed Abraham, so that you will own this land where you have been living as a foreigner, {the same land} which God gave to him." ⁵Then Isaac sent Jacob {on his way}, so Jacob started traveling to Laban's house which was in {the region of} Paddan Aram. {Laban was} the son of Bethuel the Aramean and {also} the brother of Rebekah, {who was} Jacob and Esau's mother.

Esau Marries Another Wife

⁶Now Esau had seen Isaac bless Jacob and send him to {the region of} Paddan Aram to marry a woman from there. As Isaac was blessing him, {Esau heard} him tell Jacob to not marry a Canaanite woman. ⁷{Esau also saw that} Jacob obeyed their father and mother and started traveling to Paddan Aram. ⁸That is when Esau realized that his father Isaac did not approve of {his sons marrying} Canaanite women. ⁹So in addition to the {two} wives he already had, Esau went to {the family of} Abraham's son Ishmael and married Ishmael's daughter Mahalath, whose brother was Nebaioth.

Jacob Dreams about a Stairway to Heaven

¹⁰{After} Jacob left from {his family's home} {in the city of} Beersheba, he started traveling to {the city of} Haran. ¹¹{That evening} he reached a {good} place {to sleep}, so he stopped there {for the night} because the sun had set. He chose {one} of the stones that was there and used it as a pillow. Then he lay down and went to sleep. ¹²While he was dreaming, he saw a stairway. The bottom of the stairway was on the ground and its top reached up to heaven, and he saw God's angels going up and coming down on the stairway. ¹³And there standing at the top {of the stairway} was Yahweh, and he said {to Jacob}, "I {am} Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors Abraham and Isaac serve. I will give you and your descendants this land that you are lying on. ¹⁴They will be {as numerous} as the dust {specks} on the ground, so that they live throughout this land in every direction. Because of you and your descendants, I will bless all the families in the world. ¹⁵Remember that I {will always be} with you. I will protect you wherever you go, and I will lead you back to this land. In fact, I will never leave you and I will do everything that I have promised you {that I will do}."

¹⁶Suddenly Jacob woke up from his dream and exclaimed {to himself}, "Yahweh definitely lives in this place, but I did not know {it} {before now}!" ¹⁷He was afraid, so he {also} exclaimed, "This is a terrifying place! This can only be God's house! It {must be} the entrance to heaven!"

¹⁸Early the next morning Jacob got up, took the stone that he had used as a pillow and set it up {on its end} to mark the place {where God had appeared to him}. Then he poured {some} {olive} oil on top of the stone {to dedicate the place to God}. ¹⁹He named that place Bethel, {which means “house of God.”} Previously the name of that town had been Luz.

²⁰Then Jacob made a vow {to God} and said, “God, if {you} will stay with me and protect me as I travel on this journey and if you provide me food to eat and clothes to wear, ²¹so that I return safely to my father’s home, then Yahweh, {you} will be the God whom I serve. ²²This stone that I have set up will be your house and mark the place {that you appeared to me}, and I will give back to you a tenth of everything that you give to me.”

Chapter 29

Jacob Meets Rachel and Laban in the City of Haran

¹Then Jacob left {Bethel} and continued traveling {until he came} to the land in the east where various people groups lived. ²{When he arrived there,} he looked {around}, and he saw a well in an {open} field. There were three flocks of sheep lying near the well {waiting for water}. That was the well that flocks drank water from, but there was a {heavy,} large stone covering the top of the well. ³{Every day} shepherds would bring all the flocks {of sheep} there. They would {work together to} remove the stone from the top of the well and draw water for the sheep. Then they would put the stone back over the top of the well.

⁴Jacob asked the shepherds, “My friends, where do you live?” They replied, “We {are} from {the city of} Haran.” ⁵So Jacob asked them, “Do you know Laban, Nahor’s grandson?” They answered, “{Yes,} we do.” ⁶So Jacob asked, “Is he doing well?” They answered {him}, “{Yes,} {he is} well. In fact, here comes his daughter Rachel {now}, bringing {his} sheep.” ⁷Then Jacob urged {them}, “Look, the sun is still bright, and {it is} too early to gather the flocks {for the night}. {You ought to} draw water for them and take {them} back out {to the fields} to graze {some more}.” ⁸But they replied, “We can’t {do that} until all the shepherds are here with their flocks. Then {together} we will move the stone away from the top of the well and draw water for the sheep.”

⁹While Jacob was still talking with the shepherds, Rachel arrived {at the well} with her father {Laban’s} sheep; it was her job to take care of them. ¹⁰As soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of his uncle Laban with her father’s sheep, he walked over {to the well}, removed the stone that covered it, and drew water for his uncle’s sheep.

¹¹Then he kissed Rachel {on her cheek} and {he was so happy that} he started crying. ¹²Then he told her that he {was} her father’s nephew, the son of {her aunt} Rebekah. So she ran home and told her father {the news}.

¹³When Laban heard about his sister’s son Jacob, he ran {out} to greet him. Then he hugged him and kissed him {on the cheeks} and took him to his house. Then Jacob told Laban {about himself and} everything that had happened, ¹⁴and Laban exclaimed to him, “There is no doubt that you {are} a close relative of my family!”

Jacob Works for Laban to Marry Rachel and Leah

After Jacob had stayed with Laban {and worked for him} {for} an entire month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, “{Just} because you are my nephew, {that does not mean that} you should {have to} work for me for free! Tell me what you want me to pay you.” ¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters: The name of the older {one} {was} Leah, and the younger {one} was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah had pretty eyes, but Rachel was extremely beautiful in every way. ¹⁸Jacob was in love with Rachel, so he said {to Laban}, “I will work seven years for you if you will let me marry your younger daughter Rachel.” ¹⁹Laban replied, “{I agree to your terms.} I would {much} rather give her to you {to marry} than give her to someone else. {So} stay here {and work for me}.” ²⁰So Jacob worked seven years {for Laban} so that he could marry Rachel, but he loved her so {much} that to him the time seemed {to pass quickly} like {only} a few days.

²¹{When the seven years were over,} Jacob said to Laban, “{Please} let me marry {your daughter} {Rachel} {now} so that I can live with her {as} my wife, because I have finished my {seven} years {of work} {for you}.” ²²So Laban invited all the local people and held a {wedding} feast. ²³But that evening Laban {tricked Jacob and} brought his daughter Leah {to Jacob’s tent} {instead of Rachel}, so that he had marital relations with her. ²⁴Laban also gave his female servant Zilpah to Leah {to be} {her} {personal} servant.

²⁵But the next morning Jacob was shocked to see that it was Leah {he had married}! So he complained to Laban, “You have treated me very badly! {You know that} Rachel is the one I served you for! So why did you trick me?”

²⁶Laban replied, “It is not our custom here for the younger {daughter} to marry before the older {daughter} {marries}. ²⁷{So then,} {keep Leah as your wife and} finish this week of celebrating your marriage to her. Then our family will also give you {my} younger daughter {to marry} if you will work for me for another seven years.”

²⁸So Jacob {agreed with Laban and} did what he said: he finished celebrating his marriage to Leah that week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to marry. ²⁹Laban {also} gave his servant Bilhah to Rachel to be her servant.

³⁰Then Jacob had marital relations with Rachel, and he loved her more than {he loved} Leah. Then he {started} working for Laban for seven more years.

Jacob’s Children

³¹Now Yahweh knew that Jacob did not love Leah, so he made it possible for her to have children, but Rachel was not able to conceive. ³²Then Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, {which means “See, a son!”} because she exclaimed, “Now that Yahweh has seen that I am suffering {and helped me}, surely my husband will love me!”

³³Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to {another} son. She exclaimed, “Since Yahweh heard that my husband does not love me, he has given me this child also.” So she named him Simeon, {which means “he hears.”}

³⁴Then Leah became pregnant {yet} again and gave birth to another son, and she exclaimed, “Now finally my husband will want to be with me because I have given him three sons!” That is why his name was Levi, {which means “be with.”}

³⁵Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son, and she exclaimed, “Now I will praise Yahweh!” That is why she named him Judah, {which means “praise.”} Then Leah stopped having children {for a while}.

Chapter 30

¹Meanwhile {when} Rachel realized that she was not able to bear {any} {children} for Jacob, she was jealous of her sister, and she demanded of Jacob, “Help me have children, or else I want to die!” ²Jacob became very angry with Rachel and responded, “I am not God! He is the one who has prevented you from having children!” ³Then Rachel told {him}, “You can have my servant woman Bilhah {as a wife}. Have {marital} relations with her so that she will have children for me, so that I too can have a family.” ⁴So Rachel gave Jacob her servant Bilhah to be {another} wife {for him}, and Jacob had {marital} relations with her.

⁵Then Bilhah became pregnant and had a son for Jacob, ⁶and Rachel exclaimed, “God has judged in my favor! Yes indeed, he has answered my prayer and given me a son!” That is why she named the baby Dan, {which means “he judged in my favor.”}

⁷Then Rachel’s servant Bilhah became pregnant again and had a second son for Jacob. ⁸Then Rachel exclaimed, “I have had a difficult contest with my sister, and {now} I have defeated her!” Then she named that son Naphtali, {which means “my contest.”}

⁹Now when Leah realized that she had stopped having children, she brought her servant Zilpah {to Jacob} and gave her to him to be {another} wife {for him}. ¹⁰Then Zilpah had a son for Jacob, ¹¹and Leah exclaimed, "I am so fortunate!" So she named him Gad, {which means "fortunate."}

¹²Then Leah's servant Zilpah had a second son for Jacob, ¹³and Leah exclaimed, "{God} has truly blessed me! Now {other} women will know that {God} has blessed me." So she named that son Asher, {which means "blessed."}

¹⁴Then {one day} during the season when people were harvesting wheat, Leah's son Reuben went out in a field and found {some} fertility plants, and he gave them to his mother. {When Rachel found out about the plants,} she begged Leah, "Please give me some of the fertility plants that your son found." ¹⁵But Leah replied to her, "{No!} It was {bad} enough that you stole my husband {from me}! And {now} you even want to take my son's fertility plants!" Rachel replied, "Alright then, Jacob can sleep with you tonight if you will give me your son's fertility plants."

¹⁶That evening when Jacob came {home} from {working in} the field, Leah went out to greet him and told {him}, "You must sleep with me {tonight}, because I have traded my son's fertility plants for time with you." So Jacob spent that night with Leah. ¹⁷God answered {the prayers of} Leah, so that she became pregnant and had a fifth son for Jacob. ¹⁸Then she said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband {as a wife}." So she named that son Issachar, {which means "reward."}

¹⁹Then Leah became pregnant again and had a sixth son for Jacob. ²⁰Then she said, "God has given me a valuable gift, {so that} now my husband will honor me because I have had six sons for him." So she named their son Zebulun, {which means "honor."}

²¹{Sometime} after that, Leah had a daughter and named her Dinah.

²²God had not forgotten Rachel, so he answered her {prayers} and made it possible for her to have children.

²³Then she became pregnant and had a son, and she exclaimed, "God has made it so that I am no longer ashamed!" ²⁴She named her son Joseph, {which means "may he give another,"} {because} she said, "I pray that Yahweh will give me another son."

Jacob Becomes Very Rich Working for Laban

²⁵After Rachel had Joseph, Jacob requested of Laban, "{Please} allow me to leave {here}, so that I can return to my {own} home in my {own} country. ²⁶Let me take my wives and my children, whom I have earned by working for you, so that I can leave {with them}. You yourself know how {well} I have worked for you."

²⁷But Laban responded to him, "Please be kind to me {and stay}, {because} I have found out from observing signs that Yahweh has blessed me because you {are here with me}." ²⁸Then he added, "Tell me what you want your pay to be, and that is what I will pay you." ²⁹Jacob replied to him, "You yourself know how {hard} I have worked for you and how {well} your animals have prospered under my care. ³⁰The few that you owned before I came have multiplied dramatically. Yes, Yahweh has blessed you because of me. But now, I need to also provide for my {own} family!"

³¹So Laban asked {him}, "What can I pay you {to persuade you} {to stay here}?" Jacob answered, "Do not pay me anything. Just do this {one} thing for me, and I will continue taking care of your flock{s}: ³²Let me look through all your flock{s} today and separate out from them all the lambs that are speckled, spotted or dark-colored, and {all} the young goats that are spotted or speckled. They will be my pay. ³³That way {too}, in the future it will be easy {for you} to know whether {or not} I am being honest whenever you check the animals you have paid me. {If you see that I have} any {sheep or} goats that are not speckled or spotted or any lambs {that are not} dark-colored, {you will know that} I stole them {from you}."

³⁴Laban replied, "I agree, let's do exactly as you have suggested." ³⁵But that {same} day, Laban separated {from his flocks} {all} the he-goats that had stripes or spots, and all the she-goats that had speckles or spots, all that {had any} white {marks} on them, together with all the dark-colored lambs. Then he told his sons to take care of {them},

³⁶and he {and his sons} took {those animals} a three-day walking-distance away from Jacob. Meanwhile Jacob continued taking care of the rest of Laban's flock{s}.

³⁷Then Jacob cut {some} branches from poplar {trees}, almond {trees}, and chestnut {trees}, and made white streaks on them {by peeling off long strips of bark}, which exposed the white {wood} that was inside the branches.

³⁸Then he put those {streaked} branches in all the drinking troughs that the flock{s} would come to drink from, so that the flock{s} would see the branches. {That way, whenever} the animals that were ready to mate came {to the troughs} to drink, ³⁹they would see the branches as they were mating. As a result, they would have {young that were} striped or speckled or spotted. ⁴⁰Then Jacob separated those young animals {from Laban's flocks} {to form new flocks for himself}, and he put {the rest of} the flock{s} with the striped and dark-colored {animals} in Laban's flock{s} {so that they would mate and have young that were striped or dark-colored}. In that way, {over time} he created separate flocks {of sheep and goats} for himself that he kept separate from Laban's flock{s}.

⁴¹Whenever the stronger female animals were ready to mate, Jacob put the {streaked} branches in the {drinking} troughs in front of those animals so that they would see the branches as they were mating. ⁴²But whenever the weaker female animals {were ready to mate}, Jacob did not put {the branches} {in the troughs}. In that way, {the young from} the weaker {animals} were Laban's and {the young from} the stronger {animals} were Jacob's. ⁴³So Jacob became extremely wealthy. He owned large flock{s} {of sheep and goats}, and {many} male and female servants and {many} camels and donkeys.

Chapter 31

Jacob and His Family Flee from Laban

¹Then {one day} Jacob heard that Laban's sons were {complaining and} saying, "Jacob has taken {for himself} everything that our father owned. In fact, he has gotten all his riches by taking {the animals} that were our father's!" ²Jacob also noticed that Laban no longer acted friendly toward him the way he did in the past. ³Then Yahweh told Jacob, "Return to your ancestors' homeland, where your relatives live, and I will stay with you {and help you}."

⁴So Jacob sent a message to Rachel and Leah that they should meet him at the field {where he was with} his flock{s} {of sheep and goats}. ⁵{When they arrived,} he said to them, "I have noticed that your father no longer acts friendly toward me the way he did in the past, but the God whom my father serves has stayed with me {and has helped me}. ⁶You {both} know how I have worked for your father as hard as I could, ⁷but he has cheated me by changing what he pays me ten times. However, God has not permitted him to hurt me. ⁸{For example,} every time that he told {me} that the speckled {animals} would be my pay, all {the female animals in} the flock{s} gave birth to speckled {young}. But whenever he {changed his mind and} told {me} that the striped animals would be my pay, then they all gave birth to streaked {young}. ⁹In that way, God has taken your father's animals {from him} and has given {them} to me.

¹⁰"One time during the season when the flock{s} {of sheep and goats} were mating, I had a dream. {In the dream} I looked around and was surprised to see that the {only} male goats {and sheep} that were mating with the female goats {and sheep} {were} striped, speckled, or blotched. ¹¹Then an angel from God called to me in the dream, 'Jacob!' and I answered, 'Yes, {Lord}'?" ¹²Then he said {to me}, 'Look around and notice {that} all the male goats {and sheep} that are mating with the female goats {and sheep} {are} striped, speckled, or blotched. {I have caused that to happen,} because I have noticed all {the wrong things} that Laban has been doing to you. ¹³I am the God {who appeared to you} at {the town of} Bethel, where you poured oil on top of a memorial stone {to dedicate the place to me}, {and} where you made an oath to me. {So} then, get ready {and} leave this land {immediately}, and go back to your home land.' "

¹⁴Then Rachel and Leah responded to Jacob, "We will not inherit anything from our father {when he dies}!" ¹⁵It is obvious that he treats us like strangers {and not family}. For example, he sold us {to you}, and then he spent all the

money that should have been ours. ¹⁶In fact, all the wealth that God has taken from our father {rightfully} {belongs} to us and our children. So then, {you should} do everything that God has told you {to do}."

¹⁷So Jacob {quickly} got ready {for the journey} and helped his wives and his children {get up} onto some camels.

¹⁸Then he {started} herding {the camels and} all his {other} animals toward the region of Canaan where his father Isaac lived. {He took with him} all his possessions that he had accumulated, {including} all the livestock that he had acquired {while living} in {the region of} Paddan Aram.

¹⁹Now {before that,} Laban {the Aramean} had gone away {for several days} to shear his sheep. {While her father was gone,} Rachel {entered his tent and} stole his idols {that he worshiped}. ²⁰At the same time, Jacob {also} deceived Laban by fleeing {secretly} without telling him that he was leaving. ²¹So {in that way} Jacob ran away {with his family} and {took} everything that they owned. They quickly crossed the {Euphrates} River and headed toward the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Chases After Jacob and His Family

²²Three days later someone informed Laban that Jacob had run away. ²³So Laban took {some of} his relatives with him and chased after Jacob {and his family} for seven days until they overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.

²⁴But that night God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him, "Be sure that you do not threaten Jacob in any way."

²⁵{By the time that} Laban caught up with Jacob, Jacob had {already} set up his tents in the hill country {of Gilead}, so Laban and his relatives {also} set up camp there {at a place nearby}. ²⁶Then {the next day} Laban {met with Jacob and} complained to him, "Look what you have done! You have deceived me and dragged away my daughters like prisoners of war! ²⁷You should not have deceived me and secretly run away! You should have told me {you were leaving}! {If I had known,} we could have {held a feast and} sung joyful songs {and danced} together, with tambourines and lyres playing, before sending you {on your way}. ²⁸You did not {even} let me kiss my daughters and my grandchildren {before they left}! What you have done is foolish! ²⁹I have the power to harm {all of} you, but last night {in a dream} the God whom your father serves warned me not to threaten you in any way. ³⁰Now then, {I understand that} you left because you were so homesick to return to your father's family, {but} why did you steal my gods?"

³¹Jacob answered Laban, "{We left secretly} because I was afraid. I thought that {if I told you we were leaving,} you might take your {two} daughters from me {by force}. ³²{However we did not take your gods. In fact,} if you find your gods with anyone {here}, that person will die {for stealing them}! {So} while our relatives are watching, {go ahead and} search {all} my belongings for yourself. {If you find} anything that is yours, take it." {When Jacob said that,} he did not know that Rachel {was the one who} had stolen the idols.

³³So Laban started searching in Jacob's tent. Then {he searched} through Leah's tent and through the two servant women's tent, but he did not find {anything} {that belonged to him}. Next after he left those tents, he went into Rachel's tent. ³⁴Now Rachel had hidden the idols inside {her} camel saddlebag, and she was sitting on them. So although Laban searched through everything {else} in the tent, he could not find them. ³⁵{As he was searching,} Rachel said to him, "Sir, {please} do not be upset that I am not able to get up to greet you, because it's that time of the month {when I feel weak}." {That is also why} he could not find {his} idols when he searched {her tent}.

³⁶Then Jacob became {very} angry {at Laban} and confronted him by saying to him, "Tell me my crime! Tell me what sin I have done {against you} that gives you the right to chase after me! ³⁷Now that you have searched through all my things, did you find anything {that anyone took} from your household? {If so,} put {it} here in front of our relatives, so that they can decide which one of us is right!

³⁸"For twenty years I {have worked} for you! {During all that time} your sheep and your goats had no trouble bearing young, and I have never {killed and} eaten {any} animals from your flocks. ³⁹Whenever wild animals killed {any of} your animals, I never brought {the dead animal} to you {to prove I was innocent}. {Rather,} I replaced them

at my own expense. {Besides that,} you required me to pay for {any} animals {that anyone ever} stole {at any time of} day or night. ⁴⁰That was my situation! During the days, I suffered from the hot sun, and during the nights it was so cold that I could not sleep. ⁴¹{It was like} that for me {during the entire} twenty years that I was with you. I worked for you for fourteen years in order to marry your two daughters, and {I worked} {another} six years to earn flocks {of animals} from you, even though you changed my pay ten times. ⁴²If God, whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac serve and revere, had not been with me {to take care of me}, there is no doubt that I would now be leaving {here} with {absolutely} nothing. {But} God knows how {much} you have mistreated me and how hard I have worked {for you}, so last night he rebuked {you}."

Jacob and Laban Establish a Peace Treaty with Each Other

⁴³Then Laban responded to Jacob, "These women {are} my daughters, and their children {are} my grandchildren, and these flock{s} {are} {also} mine. In fact, all that you see {here} is mine! But there is nothing I can do today to keep my daughters or their children near me {any longer}!" ⁴⁴So then, you and I should make a {peace} treaty {with each other}, and there should be something to remind us {to keep that treaty}." ⁴⁵So Jacob picked out a {large} stone and set it up {on its end} {as} a monument {to mark the place where they made their treaty}. ⁴⁶Then he told his relatives, "Gather {some more} stones." So they {all} gathered stones and put them in a {large} pile. Then everyone ate {a meal together} there next to the pile {of stones}. ⁴⁷Laban gave the pile the {Aramaic} name Jegar Sahadutha, {which means "pile that reminds,"} while Jacob gave it the {Hebrew} name Galeed, {which has the same meaning}. ⁴⁸Laban said {to him}, "{Starting} today this pile {of stones} will remind you and me {about our peace treaty}." That is why the name of that place is Galeed. ⁴⁹{Another name for the place is} Mizpah, {which means "watchtower,"} because Laban said {to Jacob}, "May Yahweh watch both of us {to make sure that we keep our treaty} while we are apart from each other. ⁵⁰If you treat my daughters badly, or if you marry {other} wives besides them, remember {that} {even if} no one {else} is watching us, God is {always} watching both of us {to hold us accountable}."

⁵¹Then Laban {also} said to Jacob, "Here is this pile {of stones}, and here is this monument which we stood up between us {to remind us about our peace treaty}. ⁵²This pile {of stones} and this monument {both} remind us that I must never go past this pile {to attack you}, and that you must never go past this pile and this monument to attack me. ⁵³May {your grandfather} Abraham's God and {my grandfather} Nahor's gods, {which were also} their father {Terah}'s gods, judge between us {and punish us if we break this agreement}!" But Jacob made a vow by the God whom his father Isaac revered {that he would keep their treaty}, ⁵⁴and he burned {the body of} an animal {on an altar} as a sacrifice {to God} on the mountain. Then he invited his relatives to eat a meal {together} {there}. So they {all} ate the meal {together} and spent the night there.

⁵⁵Early the next morning Laban got up and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters {goodbye} {on the cheeks} and asked God to bless them. Then he {and his men} left {from there} and returned home.

Chapter 32

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

¹Meanwhile Jacob continued on his journey {toward home} {with his family}, and {some} angels from God met him.

²When Jacob saw the angels, he exclaimed, "This is God's army!" So he named that place Mahanaim, {which means "two armies."}

³Then Jacob sent {some} messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau {who was living} in the region of Seir, {which was also called} the country of Edom. ⁴{Before they left,} he ordered them, "This {is what} you must tell my master Esau: 'I, your servant Jacob, want you to know that I have been staying with {our uncle} Laban all this time. ⁵I {now} own {many} cattle, donkeys, and flocks, as well as {many} male and female servants. I have sent this message to {you,} sir, hoping that you will be kind {to me} {when I arrive}.'"

⁶{After the messengers delivered Jacob's message,} they returned to Jacob and reported {to him}, "We went {and spoke} to your brother Esau. Now he is on his way {here} to meet you, but {there are} {also} 400 men {coming} with him!" ⁷{When Jacob heard that,} he was very frightened and worried. So he put {all} the people {and animals} that were with him into two {large} groups, including {his family, his servants and} {all} his flocks {of sheep and goats}, herds {of cattle} and camels. ⁸{He did that} because he thought, "If Esau {and his men} come and attack one group, then the other group might {be able to} escape."

⁹Then he prayed, "{Dear} Yahweh, the God whom my grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac served, you told me to go back to my country where my relatives live, and that you would cause me to prosper. ¹⁰I am not worthy of how kind and faithful you have always been to {me} as I have served you. When I {first} crossed this Jordan {River}, all that I owned was my walking stick, but now my family and belongings are enough to form two {large} groups.

¹¹Please rescue me {now} from my brother Esau, because I am afraid that he {and his men} will come and attack me {as well as} {these} mothers and {our} children! ¹²But you promised me that you would greatly prosper me, and that you would make my descendants {as numerous} as {the grains of} sand on the seashore, which are so numerous that no one can count them all."

¹³Then Jacob spent the night there, and {during that time} he selected many of his animals to give to his brother Esau, ¹⁴{including} 200 female goats and twenty male goats, 200 female sheep and twenty male sheep, ¹⁵thirty mother camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, {and} twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.

¹⁶Jacob put his servants in charge of the animals, with each kind {of animal} in a separate group. Then he ordered his servants, "Go ahead of me, {one group at a time,} and keep {some} distance between each group {of animals}."

¹⁷He {also} ordered the servant in charge of the first group {of animals}, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, 'Who is your master, and where are you headed? And who do these {animals} belong to {that you are driving} ahead of you?' ¹⁸then you are to tell {him}, 'Esau, sir, these {animals} belong to Jacob who {humbly} serves you. He has sent them to you as a gift. In fact, he is following us {here}.'"

¹⁹In the same way, Jacob ordered the servants who were in charge of the second and third groups {of animals}, and all {the servants} who were in charge of the {other} groups, "When you meet Esau, tell him the same thing {that I told the first servant}. ²⁰Especially be sure to tell {him} that his servant Jacob is following you {there}." {Jacob did all that,} because he thought that if he sent the gifts {of animals} ahead of himself {to Esau}, then Esau would stop being angry at him. He was hoping that when Esau saw the gifts, he would {forgive him and} welcome him when they met in person. ²¹So Jacob's servants {went} ahead of Jacob with the {animal} gifts {for Esau}, while Jacob {and his family} stayed {behind} in the camp that night.

Jacob Wrestles with God, Who Names Him Israel

²²{Later} that {same} night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives and his eleven sons across a shallow place in the Jabbok {Stream}. ²³{After} he had taken them across the stream, he {went back and} had his servants take {all} his {animals and other} belongings across {the stream} {too}. ²⁴Then Jacob was {there} by himself {for a while}, and a man {came and} fought with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man realized that he was not able to defeat Jacob, he struck him on his hip, so that it went out of place as they fought with each other.

²⁶Then the man said {to him}, "Let go of me, because it is daybreak!" But Jacob replied, "{No!} I will not let go of you until you {first} bless me!" ²⁷So the man asked him, "What {is} your name?" He answered, "{My name is} Jacob."

²⁸Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but {rather it will be} Israel, {which means "he who wrestles with God,"} because you have wrestled with God and with people, and you have won."

²⁹Then Jacob asked {the man} to tell him his name. But he replied, "There is no need for you to ask {me} what my name is!" Then the man blessed Jacob there. ³⁰So Jacob named the place Peniel, {which means "God's face,"} because {he exclaimed}, "I saw God's face {here}, but {yet} he allowed me to live!"

³¹The sun was shining as Jacob left Peniel {and returned to his family}. He was limping {as he walked} because of his hip {injury}. ³²That is why even today the people of Israel do not eat meat that comes from an {animal's} hip joint, because that is the place on Jacob's hip that God struck {and injured}.

Chapter 33

Jacob Reunites with Esau and Settles in {the City of} Shechem

¹Then Jacob looked and saw {in the distance} that Esau was coming {toward him}, and with him {were} 400 men! So Jacob {quickly} divided up {his} children among Leah, Rachel and {his} two servant wives. ²He put his servant wives and their children first {in line}, then Leah with her children behind them, and Rachel with {her son} Joseph last.

³Then Jacob himself went ahead of them {all} {toward his brother}. As he got closer to him, he bowed {with his face} to the ground seven times {to show respect}.

⁴But Esau ran to greet Jacob and hugged him. He held him tightly and kissed him {on the cheeks}, as they {both} cried {for joy}. ⁵Then Esau looked ahead and noticed the women and children {who were there}, so he asked {Jacob}, "Who {are} these {people}? {Do they belong} to you?" Jacob answered {him}, "{They are} {the wives and} the children whom God has kindly given to me, sir." ⁶Then the {two} servant wives with their children came forward, and they {all} bowed {to the ground} {in front of Esau} {to show respect}. ⁷Next Leah and her children also came forward and bowed {to the ground}. Then last {of all}, Joseph and {his mother} Rachel came forward, and they {also} bowed {to the ground}.

⁸Then Esau asked {Jacob}, "Why did you send all those herds {of animals} that I encountered?" Jacob answered {him}, "{They are gifts for you} so that you will be kind to me, sir." ⁹But Esau replied, "My brother, I {already} have enough {animals}, {so} keep them for yourself." ¹⁰But Jacob insisted, "Please do not refuse {my gifts}. {Rather,} if you want to be kind to me, then {please} accept these gifts from me. After all, for me to see your face is like seeing God's face, especially since you have welcomed me {so kindly}. ¹¹{So} please accept my gift {of animals} that I sent to you, because God has been kind to me, so that I have all {that I need}." Jacob kept insisting {that Esau accept the animals from him} until {finally} he accepted {them}.

¹²Then Esau suggested {to Jacob}, "Let's start traveling {home}, and I will accompany you." ¹³But Jacob replied to him, "Sir, as you know, {my} children {are} fragile, and I need {to be careful with} {all} the sheep and cattle that are nursing {their young}. If I force the animals to go too far {for} {even} one day, all of them will die. ¹⁴{So then,} sir, please go on {home} ahead of me, sir. I will travel along slowly at a safe pace for the animals and the children that are with me, until we reach you in {the region of} Seir."

¹⁵So Esau responded, "{Okay, then} please let me leave with you some of my men {to escort you}." But Jacob replied, "There is no need {for you} to do that. {Just} please {continue to} be kind to me, sir." ¹⁶So that {same} day Esau {and his men} started on their way back {home} to {the land of} Seir. ¹⁷Meanwhile, {instead of going to Seir,} Jacob {and his family} traveled to {the town of} Succoth. There he {and his men} built houses for himself {and his family}, and they built {some} shelters for his animals. That is why the name of that place is Succoth, {which means} "shelters."

¹⁸{After that,} Jacob {and his family} continued their journey {home} from Paddan Aram, until they arrived safely at the city of Shechem in the region of Canaan. Then they set up their tents {in a field} near that city. ¹⁹{While he was there,} he bought the land where he had set up his tents for a hundred pieces {of silver} from the descendants of Hamor, {who was} the father of Shechem. ²⁰Jacob {also} built an altar {out of stones} on that land, and he named it El Elohe Israel, {which means} "God is the God of Israel."

Chapter 34

Shechem Rapes Dinah, and Jacob's Sons Take Revenge

¹Then {one day} Dinah, {who was} the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went out to visit with {some of} the local women. ²The chief of that region was a Hivite named Hamor. His son Shechem saw {how beautiful} Dinah was, so he grabbed {hold of} her and raped her. ³Shechem admired Jacob's daughter Dinah so much that he fell in love with her and spoke sweetly to her {to try to woo her}. ⁴Then Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Negotiate {things} for me so that I can marry this girl."

⁵When Jacob found out that Shechem had dishonored his daughter Dinah, his sons were {still} {out} in the fields taking care of his animals, so he didn't say anything {about it} until they returned {home}. ⁶Meanwhile, {Shechem and} his father Hamor went to talk to Jacob. ⁷Soon Jacob's sons returned {home} from the fields. When they heard {what had happened}, they were shocked and extremely angry that Shechem had dishonored {the people of} Israel by raping Jacob's daughter. No one should ever do such a {horrible} thing! ⁸But Hamor urged Jacob and his sons, "My son Shechem deeply loves your daughter {and sister}. {So} please allow him to marry her. ⁹{In fact,} let's allow marriage between our two people groups, {so that} your daughters can marry our {young men} and your {young men} can marry our daughters. ¹⁰You can live among us. The land is available for you {to choose what you want}; live {in it} {wherever you want}. You can {also} trade {freely} here, and you can buy {your own} {land}."

¹¹Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "{Please} be kind to me {and let me marry her}. Then I will pay {you} whatever you request from me {for her}. ¹²Set the bride-price and {marriage} gifts {that I must pay} {for her} as high as you want, and I will pay {you} whatever you ask from me. {Just please} give the young woman to me to marry."

¹³But since Shechem had dishonored their sister Dinah, Jacob's sons replied to him and his father Hamor in a deceitful way. ¹⁴They said to them, "It would not be acceptable for us to let our sister marry a man {like you} who is not circumcised, because that would dishonor our family! ¹⁵The only way that we can agree with your proposal {is} if {first} you {and your people} become like us by circumcising all of your males. ¹⁶{If you do that,} then we will allow your {young} men to marry our daughters, and {we will allow} your daughters to marry our {young men}. We will {also} live among you {in this land}, so that we become one people group. ¹⁷However if you refuse to agree with our requirement that you circumcise {your people}, then we will take our sister and move {somewhere else}."

¹⁸What Jacob's sons said seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹So right away Shechem, who was the most respected member in his family, started to do what they required, because he was thrilled with Jacob's daughter. ²⁰In fact, he and his father Hamor went {straight} to their city entrance {for a town meeting}, and they told the elders of their city {about Jacob and his sons}, ²¹"These people are friendly toward us, so {let's} allow them to live in {our} land and trade {freely} here. After all, there is more than enough space in the land for them {too}. {Besides that,} {then} our {young} men can marry their daughters, and their {young} men can marry our daughters. ²²There is just one thing: They will only agree to live among us and become one people group {with us} if we circumcise all our males so that we are like them. ²³{But if we do that,} {all} their property, {including} their livestock and all their {other} animals will belong to us! {So} let's just agree to do what they require so that they will live among us!"

²⁴All {the men} who were leaders of the city agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, so they circumcised every male in the city, including themselves.

²⁵Three days later, when the men of {the city of} Shechem were {all} {still} sore {from being circumcised}, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, {who were} Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the city, with no one opposing them. They killed all the men {there} ²⁶with their swords, including Hamor and his son Shechem. Then they got Dinah from Shechem's house and left {the city}. ²⁷{Next} {all} Jacob's sons went {into the city} and took everything valuable from the dead bodies and from {the rest of} the city. {They did that,} because {that was where}

Shechem had dishonored their sister. ²⁸They plundered whatever was in the city and in the {surrounding} fields, including the people's flocks {of sheep and goats}, their herds {of cattle} and their donkeys. ²⁹They carried away all the valuable things the people of Shechem had owned, including everything that was in their houses. They also captured their women and children.

³⁰Later Jacob scolded Simeon and Levi {by saying}, "You have brought me {serious} trouble by causing the Canaanites and Perizzites who live in this land to hate us!" I {only} have a few men {to defend us}, so if they {all} join {forces} against us and attack us, they will destroy us and {the rest of} our family!" ³¹But Simeon and Levi responded, "Shechem should not have treated our sister like a whore!"

Chapter 35

God Blesses Jacob at {the Town of} Bethel

¹Then God commanded Jacob, "Leave here and move to {the town of} Bethel. Build an altar there {and offer sacrifices on it} to worship {me as} the God who appeared to you {there} when you were running away from your brother Esau." ²So Jacob told his family and everyone else who {was} with him, "Get rid of the idols you have that other people groups worship. Also wash and make yourselves clean and put on clean clothes. ³Then we will leave here and move to {the town of} Bethel. There we will build an altar and worship God because he helped me during the time when I was in trouble. He has {always} been with us {and taken care of us} everywhere that we have gone." ⁴So they gave Jacob all their idols and {all} their earrings. Then Jacob buried all those things at the base of the oak tree that {was} near {the city of} Shechem.

⁵Then Jacob and everyone with him left that place, and God caused {the people in} the surrounding towns to be terrified, so that they did not attack Jacob's family. ⁶He and his family {continued traveling} in the region of Canaan, and they arrived at {the town of} Luz, which {also has the name} Bethel. ⁷There Jacob built an altar, and he named the place El Bethel, {which means "the God of Bethel,"} because that is where God had {first} appeared to him when he was running away from his brother.

⁸{While they were there,} Deborah died. She was the servant that had helped raise {Jacob's mother} Rebekah {when she was young}. Jacob buried her body at the base of an oak tree, {in the valley} near {the town of} Bethel. So he named the place Allon Bacuth, {which means "oak tree of mourning."}

⁹Now that Jacob had returned from {the region of} Paddan Aram, God appeared to him {at Bethel} again. {There} God blessed him ¹⁰and said to him, "{Although} your name {has been} Jacob, that will no longer be your name. Rather, you will have the name Israel!" So {once again} God gave Jacob the name Israel.

¹¹Then God {also} said to Jacob, "I am Almighty God. Have many children so that you {and your descendants} become {very} numerous. Your descendants will become many people groups, and some of your descendants will be kings. ¹²{Besides that,} the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I {also} give to you and your descendants {who live} after you." ¹³After God finished talking to Jacob, he left him there and went up {to heaven}.

¹⁴Then Jacob stood a {large} stone up {on its end} at the place where God had talked to him, to mark the place {as special}. Then he poured some wine and some {olive} oil on the stone marker {to thank God and dedicate the place to him}. ¹⁵Since God had talked to Jacob at that place, Jacob named it Bethel, {which means "God's house."}

Rachel Dies Giving Birth to Benjamin

¹⁶Later Jacob and his family moved on from Bethel and headed for {the town of} Ephrath. While they were still some distance from there, {his wife} Rachel went into labor, but she was experiencing great difficulty. ¹⁷Then when her labor pain was at its worst, {the baby was born and} the woman who was helping her deliver exclaimed to her, "Do not despair! You {now} have another son!" ¹⁸But Rachel was dying, and as her spirit was leaving her body, she

named her baby Benoni {which means “son of my sorrow”}. But {later,} his father {Jacob} changed his name to Benjamin, {which means “son of my right hand.”}

¹⁹After Rachel died, they buried her body beside the road to {the town of} Ephrath, which {also has the name} Bethlehem. ²⁰Jacob stood a stone up {on its end} on her grave {to mark where it was}. {In fact,} that {same} stone still marks Rachel's grave today.

Jacob's Twelve Sons

²¹Then Israel {and his family} moved on {from there} and set up their tents on the south side of the tower of Eder.

²²While they were living in that area, {Israel's son} Reuben committed adultery with his father's servant-wife Bilhah, and Israel found out {about it}.

{With the birth of Benjamin,} Jacob {now} had {a total of} twelve sons. ²³The sons {he had} with Leah {were} Reuben, {who was} his oldest {child}, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. ²⁴The sons {he had} with Rachel {were} Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵The sons {he had} with Rachel's servant Bilhah {were} Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶And the sons {he had} with Leah's servant Zilpah were Gad and Asher. {All} those {are} the sons Jacob had {starting from the time that he lived} in {the region of} Paddan Aram.

Isaac Dies

²⁷Then Jacob went {home} to his father Isaac {in the city of} Mamre, which {also has the name} Kiriath Arba or Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac {and their families} had lived for a while {as foreigners}. ²⁸Isaac lived to be 180 years old. ²⁹Then, after living a long, full life, he took his last breath and died, and he joined his ancestors {who had died before him}. Then his sons Esau and Jacob buried his body.

Chapter 36

Esau's Descendants

¹Here {is} a record about the descendants of Esau, whose {name} was {also} Edom. ²Esau had married {two} Canaanite women. {Their names were} Adah, {who was} the daughter of a Hittite {man} named Elon, and Oholibamah, whose father was Anah and whose grandfather was a Hivite named Zibeon. ³{Esau also married} Basemath, {who was} Ishmael's daughter and Nebaioth's sister.

⁴Adah had {a son} with Esau {whom they named} Eliphaz, while Basemath had {a son named} Reuel. ⁵Oholibamah had {sons named} Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. {All} those {were} Esau's sons whom he and his wives had {while they lived} in the region of Canaan.

⁶Later Esau moved away from his brother Jacob. He took {with him} his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the {other} members of his household, as well as his livestock and all {the rest of} his animals and all the {other} belongings that he had gotten in the region of Canaan. ⁷The reason {he moved away} is that he and Jacob {both} owned so many animals that they could not live together {in the same area}. The land where they were staying was {just} not big enough to support them {both} because they had so many livestock. ⁸That is how Esau {and his family} ended up living in the Seir Mountains. {That is the record about} Esau, that {is}, Edom.

⁹Here {is} a {more detailed} record of the descendants of Esau, {who was} the ancestor of the Edomites {who live} in the Seir Mountains. ¹⁰{Two of} Esau's sons {were} Eliphaz, whom he had with his wife Adah, and Reuel, whom he had with his wife Basemath. ¹¹Eliphaz {and his wife} had sons {they named} Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹²Eliphaz and his servant-wife Timna had {a son they named} Amalek. Eliphaz's sons {were} {all} grandsons of {Esau and} his wife Adah.

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

¹⁴Esau and his wife Oholibamah had sons {whom they named} Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. {Oholibamah was} the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon.

¹⁵Here {is} {a record of} the descendants of Esau {who became} clan leaders: The sons of his firstborn {son} Eliphaz {who became} clan leaders {were} Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. They {were} the clan leaders {who descended} from Eliphaz {and lived} in the land of Edom. They {were} {all} grandsons of Adah {and Esau}.

¹⁷The sons of Esau's son Reuel {who became} clan leaders {were} Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They {were} the clan leaders {who descended} from Reuel {and lived} in the land of Edom. They {were} {all} grandsons of {Esau and} his wife Basemath.

¹⁸The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah {who became} clan leaders were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. They {were} the clan leaders {who descended} from {Esau and} his wife Oholibamah, {who was} Anah's daughter.

¹⁹{All} those {clan leaders} {were} the descendants of Esau, that {is}, Edom, and each one led his own family group.

Seir's Descendants

²⁰Here is {a record of} the descendants of Seir the Horite who were {also} living in that land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. They were the descendants of Seir {who became} clan leaders over the Horites in the land of Edom.

²²Lotan's sons were Hori and Hemam, and his sister {was} Timna.

²³Shobal's sons {were} Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

²⁴Zibeon's sons {were} Aiah and Anah. This {is} {the same} Anah who discovered some hot springs while he was {out} in the desert grazing his father's donkeys. ²⁵Anah's children {were} {his son} Dishon and his daughter Oholibamah. ²⁶Dishon's sons {were} Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

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

²⁸Dishan's sons {were} Uz and Aran.

²⁹The Horites {who became} clan leaders {were} Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. Those {were} the Horite clan leaders. They led their own family groups {and lived} in the land of Seir.

The Rulers over the Land of Edom

³¹Here {is} {a record of} the kings who ruled over {the people of} the land of Edom before the Israelites had their own king. ³²Bela, {who was} the son of Beor, was the {first} king to rule over {the people of} {the land of} Edom. The name of his hometown {that he ruled from} {was} Dinhabah. ³³When {King} Bela died, Jobab, {who was} the son of Zerah, replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown of} Bozrah. ³⁴When {King} Jobab died, Husham replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown, which was in} the land where the Temanites lived. ³⁵When {King} Husham died, Hadad, {who was} the son of Bedad, replaced him as king. {King Hadad is the one} who defeated the Midianites {in battle} in the land of Moab. The name of his hometown {that he ruled from} {was} Avith. ³⁶When {King} Hadad died, Samlah replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown of} Masrekah. ³⁷When {King} Samlah died, Shaul replaced him as king {and ruled} from {his hometown of} Rehoboth beside the {Euphrates} River. ³⁸When {King} Shaul died, Baal-Hanan, {who was} the son of Acbor, replaced him as king. ³⁹When

{King} Baal-Hanan died, Hadar replaced him as king, and the name of his hometown {that he ruled from} {was} Pau. His wife's name {was} Mehetabel, {who was} the daughter of Matred {and} the granddaughter of Me-Zahab.

⁴⁰Here {are} the names of {more of} the clan leaders {who descended} from Esau; {each clan leader led} his own family group and ruled his own region that was named after him: Timna, Alvan, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel, {and} Iram. {All of} those {were} clan leaders over the Edomites; they {all} led their own settlements in the land that they controlled. This {concludes the record about} Esau, {who was} the ancestor of {all} the Edomites.

Chapter 37

Joseph's Dreams Anger His Brothers

¹Jacob continued to live in the region of Canaan where his father {Isaac} had lived for a while {as a foreigner}.

²Here is {more of} the record about Jacob and his family: {One day} {his} seventeen-year-old son Joseph was taking care of the {family's} flocks {of sheep and goats}. Joseph was helping his brothers {who were} the sons of his father's {servant} wives Bilhah and Zilpah, and he told their father about the bad things they were doing.

³Now Israel, {that is, Jacob,} loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born to him when he was old. So he made a {special} robe for Joseph that had many colors. ⁴When Joseph's brothers realized that their father loved Joseph more than the rest of them, they hated him so much that they would not talk to him in a friendly manner.

⁵{One night} Joseph had a dream, and he told his brothers about it. That made them hate him even more {than before}. ⁶{This is what} he told them, "Please listen to this dream that I had: ⁷{In it} I saw us {working} out in a field {cutting and} tying bundles {of grain stalks}. Then suddenly the bundle that I had made stood up straight. Then I saw that the bundles you had made stood around {my bundle} and bowed down to my bundle {to show respect}."

⁸His brothers responded to him, "Do you really expect to be our king? You will never rule over us!" So they hated him even more {intensely} {than they did before} because of what he had said {to them} about his dreams.

⁹Then Joseph had another dream that he {also} told to his brothers. He said, "Listen, I {just} had another dream, and {in it} I saw that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down {to the ground} before me {to show respect}." ¹⁰Later Joseph told {the same dream} to {both} his father and his brothers, but his father scolded him by saying, "That {is} a strange dream that you had! Do you really expect your mother and me and your brothers to bow down before you?" ¹¹So Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father continued to think about what it all could mean.

Joseph's Brothers Sell Him as a Slave and He Is Taken to {the Country of} Egypt

¹²Sometime after that, Joseph's brothers took their father's flock{s} {of sheep and goats} to graze {in the fields} near {the city of} Shechem. ¹³Then {one day} Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are tending {our flocks} near {the city of} Shechem. Get ready so that I can send you to them." Joseph responded, "I'm ready {to go}."

¹⁴Then Israel told him, "Please go and check on how your brothers and the flock{s} are doing. Then report back to me {what you find out}." So Israel sent him {on his way} from {their home in} the valley near {the city of} Hebron, and Joseph traveled to {the city of} Shechem. ¹⁵{When he arrived there,} a man saw him searching around in the {nearby} fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" ¹⁶He replied, "I am looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are tending {their flocks}?" ¹⁷The man answered, "They were here and then left, but I overheard them say that they were going to {the town of} Dothan."

So Joseph followed his brothers and caught up with them near {the town of} Dothan. ¹⁸But they saw him while he was still some distance away, and before he reached them, they made plans to kill him. ¹⁹They said to each other

{about him}, "Look, here comes that expert dreamer! ²⁰Come on, let's kill him and throw his body into one of the pits {here}. Then we can tell {people} that a vicious animal ate him up, and we will watch if his dreams come true!"

²¹But Reuben heard {their plan}, so he {tried to} rescue Joseph from them by urging them, "We should not kill him."

²²Then he continued, "You must not take his life. {Instead} put him into this pit {here} in the desert, but you must not harm him." Reuben was planning to rescue Joseph from them and take him back {home} to their father.

²³When Joseph reached his brothers, they {took hold of him and} ripped off the colorful robe that he was wearing.

²⁴Then they grabbed him and put him into the pit. The pit {was} empty and {completely} dry inside.

²⁵Then {some of} Joseph's brothers sat down to eat a meal. {While they were eating,} they looked around and noticed {that} a {large} group of Ishmaelite {traders} was traveling {toward them} from {the region of} Gilead. Their camels were loaded with {expensive} spices, healing salve, and incense {that} they were taking down to {the country of} Egypt {to sell there}. ²⁶So Judah urged to his brothers, "We will not gain anything by killing our brother and trying to hide it! ²⁷{Instead,} come on, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite {traders} {over there} so that we will not be guilty of harming him. After all, he {is} a member of our family, our own brother." Judah's brothers agreed {with him}. ²⁸So when the Midianite {(that is, Ishmaelite)} traders came by {them}, {some of} Joseph's brothers pulled Joseph up out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty {pieces of} silver. Then the Ishmaelites took him to {the country of} Egypt.

²⁹Later Reuben came back to the pit, and he was shocked to see that Joseph was not there! So he tore his clothes {to show distress}. ³⁰Then he went to his brothers and exclaimed {to them}, "Joseph is gone! Now I do not know what to do!" ³¹So Joseph's brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in the {goat's} blood.

³²Then they had someone take the colorful robe back to their father and say {to him} {for them}, "We found this {robe}. Please look at it {to see} whether or not it is your son's." ³³Jacob recognized the robe and exclaimed, "{This is} my son {Joseph}'s robe! Clearly a fierce animal has torn him to bits and eaten him up!" ³⁴Then Jacob tore his clothes {in grief}, put on mourning clothes, and for many days he mourned that his son had died. ³⁵All Jacob's sons and daughters came {to him} {and tried} to console him, but he did not let them comfort him. Instead he said {to them}, "{No,} I will continue to mourn {for my son} until I {die and} go down to be with him in the afterworld." So Joseph's father continued to mourn for him.

³⁶Meanwhile, in {the country of} Egypt, the Midianite {traders} sold Joseph to Potiphar, {who was} an officer under Pharaoh {the king of Egypt}; {he was} the captain over the {palace} guards.

Chapter 38

Judah and His Daughter-in-law Tamar

¹About that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to {the town of} Adullam and stayed near {the home of} a man from there whose name {was} Hirah. ²{While he was living} there, he met a Canaanite woman whose father {was} Shua, and he married her. Then he had {marital} relations with her, ³and she became pregnant. When she gave birth, she had a son, whom Judah named Er. ⁴Then Judah's wife became pregnant again and gave birth to {another} son, and she named him Onan. ⁵Then she {became pregnant} yet again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Shelah. When she gave birth to Shelah, Judah was at {the town of} Kezib.

⁶When Judah's oldest son Er {grew up}, Judah arranged for him to marry a woman whose name {was} Tamar. ⁷But Er did things that Yahweh considered to be evil, so Yahweh caused him to die.

⁸After that, Judah told {his son} Onan, "Marry your brother's widow {Tamar} {according to our custom} so that you fulfill your obligation to her {as her brother-in-law} and have children {with her} for your {deceased} brother."

⁹However Onan knew that the children {they would have together} would not belong to him. So whenever he had

{marital} relations with Tamar, he wasted {his semen} on the ground to keep her from {getting pregnant and} having {any} children for his brother. ¹⁰Yahweh considered what Onan did to be evil, so he caused him to die too.

¹¹Then Judah told his daughter-in-law Tamar, "{Go and} live at your father's house, and do not marry again until my son Shelah is old enough {to marry you}." {Actually Judah did not want Shelah to marry Tamar} because he was afraid {that if he did,} he would also die like his brothers had. So Tamar went {home} to her father's house and stayed there.

¹²After a long time, Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. After Judah finished mourning {for her}, {one day} he {decided to} go to {the town of} Timnah {to work} with {the men} who were shearing his sheep {there}. He and his friend Hirah, {who was} from {the town of} Adullam, {started traveling there together}. ¹³Meanwhile someone told Tamar, "Listen, your father-in-law {Judah} is on his way to {the town of} Timnah to shear his sheep." ¹⁴So she changed from her clothes that showed she was a widow and covered her face with a {thin} headscarf and dressed herself {like a prostitute}. Then {she went} toward {the town of} Timnah and sat down near the gateway of {the town of} Enaim, which {was} along the way. {She did that} because she had noticed that Shelah was now old enough {to marry}, but Judah had not given her to him to marry {as he was supposed to do}.

¹⁵{As Judah was traveling to Timnah,} he saw Tamar {beside the road}, but since she had veiled her face {with a scarf}, {he could not see who she was, and} he assumed that she was a prostitute. ¹⁶So he went over to where she was {sitting} beside the road and said {to her}, "Let me have sex with you." {He did that} because he did not recognize that she was his daughter-in-law {Tamar}. So she asked {him}, "What will you pay me so that you can have sex with me?" ¹⁷He answered {her}, "I will send {you} a young goat from my flock." She replied, "{I will agree,} if you will give {me} something {valuable} {of yours} to keep until you deliver {the goat to me}." ¹⁸So Judah asked, "What do you want me to leave with you?" She answered {him}, "{Leave me} your name seal with its cord {that you have around your neck}, and your walking stick that you are holding." So he gave {those things} to her. Then he had {sexual} relations with her, and she became pregnant from him. ¹⁹After that, Tamar left {Judah} and returned {home}. Then she took off her scarf and put on her clothes that showed she was a widow.

²⁰Meanwhile Judah sent a young goat with his friend {Hirah}, {who was} from {the town of} Adullam, to reclaim his things from the prostitute {whom he had given them to}. But {when Hirah looked for her,} he was not able to find her. ²¹So he asked {some} men {who lived} near the place where she had been, "Where {is} the temple prostitute who was {sitting} beside the road near {the town of} Enaim?" But they answered {him}, "There has never been a temple prostitute around here." ²²So Hirah returned to Judah and told {him}, "I was not able to find the prostitute. In fact, the men who live near that town claim {that} there has never been a temple prostitute around there."

²³Then Judah said, "{Stop looking for her and} let her keep {my things} for herself. Otherwise everyone will make fun of us. Besides that, I {did try to} send this goat {to her}, but you were not able to find her."

²⁴About three months later, someone told Judah, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has acted like a prostitute. In fact, look, {she is} {now} pregnant from doing that!" Judah responded {angrily}, "Take her outside {the town} and burn her {to death}!" ²⁵{So they went to get her, but} as they were taking her out {of the town}, she sent {a messenger} to her father-in-law {along with his things} and told the messenger to say, "The man who owns these things is the one who got me pregnant. Please identify {the man} who owns this name seal with its cord and this walking stick."

²⁶Judah recognized {his things} and confessed, "Tamar is right, and I am wrong, because I refused to have my son Shelah marry her {as I was supposed to}!" {So they released Tamar,} and {after that} Judah never had {sexual} relations with her again.

²⁷Months later, when Tamar was ready to give birth, they realized that {there were} twins inside her! ²⁸While she was in labor, {one of them} stuck out {his} hand. So the midwife {who was there} tied a {bright} red string around his wrist and said, "This {baby} was born first." ²⁹But then the baby pulled his hand back inside, and suddenly his brother was born {first} {instead}. So the midwife exclaimed {to the baby}, "What a dramatic way for you to burst out!" That is why he was named Perez, {which means "break out."} ³⁰After that, his brother, who {had} the {bright} red string on his wrist, came out. So he was named Zerah, {which means "brightness."}

Chapter 39

Potiphar's Wife Tries to Seduce Joseph

¹Now {as you know,} {some} Ishmaelite traders had taken Joseph down to {the country of} Egypt, and an Egyptian {named} Potiphar had bought him {as a servant} from them. Potiphar {was} {one of} {King} Pharaoh's officers, the captain over the king's {personal} guards. ²As Joseph worked in his Egyptian owner's house, Yahweh was with him {and helped him}, so that he succeeded in everything he did. ³His owner realized that Yahweh {was} with him and was helping him to succeed in everything that he did. ⁴So Potiphar was pleased with Joseph and made him his personal servant. He also put him in charge of managing his household and taking care of everything {else} {that} he owned. ⁵From the time {that} Joseph's Egyptian owner did that, Yahweh blessed the household of that Egyptian {man} for Joseph's sake. He blessed everything that belonged to him, {including} {everything} in {his} home and in {his} fields. ⁶In fact, after Joseph's owner put him in charge of everything that he owned, he did not {need to} concern himself with anything {in his household} except for {personal matters like} {deciding} what {kind of} food {he wanted} to eat.

Joseph was well-built and good-looking. ⁷So after a while, his owner's wife started looking at him {with desire} and told {him}, "Come to bed with me!" ⁸But Joseph refused and said to her, "Listen, because of me, my owner does not {have to} concern himself with anything that {is} in {his} house. In fact, he has put me in charge of everything that he owns, ⁹{so that} he has no one in his household who has more authority than I do. He has given me freedom with everything {in his household}, except you, {of course,} because you {are} his wife. So there is no way I would {ever} sin against God by doing such an evil thing!" ¹⁰Day after day Potiphar's wife kept pressuring Joseph to go to bed with her, but he refused her requests and stayed away from her.

¹¹Then one day Joseph went to {his owner's} house {as usual} to do his work, but no other menservants from the household were there. ¹²So Potiphar's wife {saw her chance and} grabbed {hold of} Joseph by his robe {and} demanded, "Come to bed with me!" But {immediately} he fled and left his robe in her hands as he ran outdoors. ¹³As soon as she saw that Joseph had run outdoors and left his robe {behind} in her hands, ¹⁴she summoned the {other} menservants from her household. Then {when they arrived,} she exclaimed to them, "Look, my husband brought {this} Hebrew servant {here} among us to make fools of us! He came here to rape me, but I screamed loudly {for help}!" ¹⁵Then as soon as he heard me scream like that, he left his robe with me and ran outdoors!"

¹⁶So Potiphar's wife kept Joseph's robe with her until {her husband,} Joseph's owner, returned home. ¹⁷Then she told him the same story. She said, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought among us came here to make a fool of me!" ¹⁸But as soon as I screamed loudly, he left his robe with me and ran outdoors!" ¹⁹When Joseph's owner heard what his wife said his servant had done to her, he became very angry. ²⁰So he {had soldiers} arrest Joseph and put him in the prison where they kept people who had committed crimes against the king.

Joseph remained there in prison, ²¹but Yahweh was with him and was kind to him and caused the prison warden to be pleased with him, {so that he treated him well}. ²²So {before long} the warden put Joseph in charge of all the {other} prisoners who {were} in that prison, so that he {was the one who} managed everything that they did there. ²³The warden did not {need to} pay attention to anything at all that Joseph was in charge of, because Yahweh was with Joseph and enabled him to succeed at everything he did.

Chapter 40

The Head Wine-server's and Head Baker's Dreams

¹Sometime after that, the {head} wine-server and the {head} baker disobeyed their master, {who was} {Pharaoh,} the king of Egypt. ²As a result, {King} Pharaoh was furious with those two officers. ³So he {had his soldiers arrest them and} put them in prison at the captain over the guards' house, in the same prison where Joseph was. ⁴{There}

the captain over the guards appointed Joseph to {take care of} them, so he served them, and they remained in prison {for} some time.

⁵One night the king of Egypt's wine server and baker each had a dream while they were in prison. Each {one's} dream had its own meaning. ⁶The next morning, when Joseph came to {serve} them, he noticed that they looked sad. ⁷So he asked them, "Why do you look {so} unhappy today?" ⁸They answered him, "We {each} had a dream {last night}, but there is no one {here} who can tell {us} what our dreams mean." Joseph replied, "God is the {only} one who gives someone the ability to interpret {the meaning of dreams}. Please tell me {what you dreamed}."

⁹Then the head wine-server told Joseph what was in his dream. He said, "While I was dreaming, I saw a vine in front of me ¹⁰that had three branches. Soon buds started forming {on the branches}. {Then} {the buds} became flowers, {and the flowers} became bunches of ripe grapes. ¹¹Next I was holding {King} Pharaoh's cup, and I picked grapes {from the vine} and squeezed juice from them into the cup. Then I handed the cup to Pharaoh {and he drank from it}."

¹²Joseph said to him, "This {is} what your dream means: The three branches {represent} three days. ¹³In three days {King} Pharaoh will summon you and give you back your job, so that you will {again} serve wine to him, as you used to do when you were his wine-server. ¹⁴When {you are out of prison and} everything is going well for you, please remember that I was {here} with you, and please be kind to me and mention my situation to {King} Pharaoh so that he releases me from this prison. ¹⁵People brought me {here} by force from the land where {my people,} the Hebrews, live. Even here {in Egypt} I have done nothing {wrong} to deserve being in a dungeon."

¹⁶When the head baker heard the positive meaning that Joseph gave {for the first dream}, he told him, "I also {had a dream}, and while I was dreaming, I saw three bread baskets {stacked} on my head. ¹⁷In the top basket {there were} many {kinds} of bread and cakes for {King} Pharaoh {to eat}, but {some} birds were gobbling them {up} from the basket."

¹⁸Joseph said {to him}, "This {is} what your dream means: The three baskets {represent} three days. ¹⁹In three days {King} Pharaoh will {have his soldiers} chop off your head and impale your body on a {sharp} pole, where vultures will eat {all} your flesh off your bones."

²⁰Then sure enough, three days later {it was} {King} Pharaoh's birthday, and he invited all his officers to attend a banquet. {During the banquet,} he {had soldiers} bring {his} head wine-server and head baker {to the banquet} in front of {all} his {other} officers. ²¹Then he returned the head wine-server to his {former} work, so that he {again} served wine to him. ²²But he {had his soldiers execute} the head baker {and} impale {his body on a pole}. {Everything happened} exactly the way Joseph had explained {their dreams} to them.

²³However the head wine-server {completely} forgot about Joseph and did not remember {to tell Pharaoh about} him.

Chapter 41

Joseph Explains the Meaning of Pharaoh's Dreams

¹Two whole years later, {King} Pharaoh had a dream. {In the dream} he saw himself standing beside the {Nile} River. ²Suddenly, seven healthy-looking, fat cows walked up out of the river and started eating the tall grass {beside the river}. ³Next he saw that seven sickly-looking, scrawny cows walked up out of the river and stood next to the {first} cows on the river bank. ⁴Then the sickly-looking, scrawny cows devoured the seven healthy-looking, fat cows. {Just} then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵Then he went {back} to sleep and had a second {dream}. {This time} he saw seven plump, well-formed heads of grain growing on the same plant. ⁶Suddenly, seven small heads of grain that the {hot} desert wind had dried out

started growing {on the same plant} beside the first heads. ⁷Next, the small heads of grain gobbled up the seven big, well-formed heads. At that point, Pharaoh woke up and realized that {he had been} dreaming.

⁸The next morning Pharaoh was upset {about the dreams}, so he had {servants} summon all the sorcerers and {other} scholars in {the country of} Egypt. {When they arrived,} he told them what he had dreamed, but none of them was able to explain to him {what} the dreams {meant}. ⁹Then the head wine-server said to Pharaoh, "{Sir,} today I remember {the time} when I offended {you}." ¹⁰{Some time ago,} {King} Pharaoh, you were angry with your officials, {including} me and the head baker, and you put us in prison at the captain of the guards' house. ¹¹{While we were there,} one night we {each} had a dream, {and} each of our dreams had a different meaning. ¹²There was a young Hebrew man with us {who was} a servant for the captain over the guards. After we told him {our dreams}, he explained them to us. He told us what each of our dreams meant. ¹³And sure enough, everything happened exactly the way he had explained {the dreams} to us: you returned me to my {former} work {as your wine-server}, and you {had your soldiers} execute the baker."

¹⁴{When Pharaoh heard that,} {immediately} he had {servants} summon Joseph. So they went right away and got him out of the prison. Then after he shaved {his head and face} and changed into appropriate clothing, he went before Pharaoh. ¹⁵Then Pharaoh said to him, "I had a dream, but no one has been able to explain {to me} what it means. But someone told me about you, {that} when you hear a dream, {you are able} to explain what it means."

¹⁶Joseph replied to him, "{Sir,} I do not have that ability {on my own}, {but} God will explain {your dream} so that {you,} {King} Pharaoh, will have peace {in your heart}."

¹⁷So Pharaoh told Joseph, "As I was dreaming, I saw myself standing beside the {Nile} River. ¹⁸Then suddenly, seven fat, healthy-looking cows walked up out of the river {onto the bank} and started eating the tall grass {that was there}. ¹⁹Suddenly seven other cows walked up {out of the river} behind the first cows; {they were} in terrible condition, very sickly-looking and scrawny. {In fact,} I have never seen such awful-looking {cows} anywhere in the land of Egypt! ²⁰Then the scrawny, sickly cows devoured the seven fat ones. ²¹But {even} after they had swallowed them, no one would {ever} know that they had devoured them, because they {still} looked just as terrible as before. That's when I woke up.

²²"Then I {went back to sleep and} had {another} dream. {This time} I saw that there were seven big, well-formed heads of grain growing on the same plant. ²³Then suddenly, seven small heads of grain sprouted {on the same plant} next to the first heads. {These had} wilted because the {hot} desert wind had dried them out. ²⁴Then the small heads of grain gobbled up the seven well-formed ones. I told {my dreams} to {my} sorcerers, but none of them could explain to me {what the dreams meant}."

²⁵Then Joseph told {King} Pharaoh, "{Your Majesty,} {both of} your dreams mean the same thing. {Through them,} God is revealing to you what he is going to do. ²⁶The seven healthy cows {represent} seven years, and the seven well-formed heads of grain {represent} {the same} seven years. {Both} dreams mean the same thing. ²⁷The seven scrawny and sickly cows that walked up {out of the river} behind the first cows {represent} {a different} seven years, and {so do} the seven small heads of grain that the desert wind had dried out. {They both mean that} there will be a famine that lasts seven years. ²⁸{King} Pharaoh, that {is} what I was talking about {when I told} you {that} God is revealing to you what he is going to do. ²⁹Listen, {first} there will be seven years when people will have more than enough food {to eat} throughout the entire country of Egypt. ³⁰But after that, there will be a famine that lasts seven years. As a result, the people in Egypt will forget what it was like in their country during all the years when they had more than enough {food} {to eat}, because the famine will devastate the country {so that many people will starve}. ³¹That's right, people will completely forget about the years when there was plenty of food, because the famine {that comes} after that {will be} so severe. ³²The fact that you, {King} Pharaoh, had two {different} dreams that mean the same thing shows that God has decided what he is going to do, and he will make it happen soon.

³³"So now, {your Majesty,} I recommend that you look for a man {who is} intelligent and knows what to do, and put him in charge over the country of Egypt. ³⁴Sir, you should {also} appoint {regional} administrators in charge of the country, and {have them} collect one-fifth of {the crops that people harvest throughout} the country during the

seven years when harvests are plentiful. ³⁵Have them collect all that {surplus} grain during the prosperous years ahead {when there will be plenty of food}. Using your authority, {King} Pharaoh, have them stockpile {that} grain {in storehouses} in the cities and {have soldiers} guard it, so that there will be food {for the people}. ³⁶That food should stay in storage for {the people of} the country {to eat} during the famine that will last seven years in the country of Egypt, so that they will not starve to death because of the severe lack of food."

Joseph Becomes the Governor over the Country of Egypt and Stores Up Food

³⁷What Joseph proposed seemed like a good plan to Pharaoh and all his officials. ³⁸So Pharaoh exclaimed to them, "{Certainly} we cannot find anyone else more qualified than this man whom God's Spirit guides!" ³⁹Then he said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, no one {else} is {as} intelligent as you {are} or knows what to do {in this situation}. ⁴⁰{So} I am putting you in charge of my household {and my kingdom}, so that all the people in my country must obey whatever you command. Only I who am king will have higher authority than you." ⁴¹Then Pharaoh said, "Listen, I hereby put you in charge of the whole country of Egypt." ⁴²Then he took off his {official} identification ring and put it on Joseph's finger {to show that he had appointed him}. He {also} gave Joseph {expensive} linen clothes to wear and put a chain {made} of gold around his neck. ⁴³Then Pharaoh had Joseph ride {around} in the chariot that showed he was the second highest ruler in the country. {As he rode,} messengers {walked} {in the road} ahead of him calling out {to everyone}, "Make way!" In that way, Pharaoh {officially} appointed Joseph to be in charge of the whole country of Egypt.

⁴⁴Pharaoh {also} told Joseph, "I, Pharaoh, {hereby command} that throughout the whole country of Egypt, everyone must only do what you tell them to do!" ⁴⁵Then Pharaoh gave Joseph the {Egyptian} name Zaphenath-Paneah, {which means "the one who explains/reveals secrets,"} and he gave him {a woman named} Asenath to be {his} wife. {She was} the daughter of Potiphara, {who was} a priest {at the temple} in {the city of} On. Then Joseph {started his duties and} traveled throughout the country of Egypt.

⁴⁶Joseph {was} thirty years old when he {started} serving Pharaoh, the king over Egypt. {After Pharaoh appointed him,} Joseph left him and traveled throughout the whole country of Egypt {doing his work}. ⁴⁷During the seven years when food was plentiful, the land produced huge amounts of grain. ⁴⁸So Joseph {had his helpers} collect all the {surplus} grain {that people harvested} during {those} seven years in the country of Egypt, and he {had them} stockpile {that} grain in the cities. In each city he {had them} store the grain {that people harvested} from the surrounding fields. ⁴⁹In that way, Joseph stockpiled so much grain that it was as {plentiful as} the {grains of} sand on the seashore. {In fact,} it was so plentiful that he stopped keeping records {of it} because it was too much to keep track of.

⁵⁰Before the {seven} famine years started, Joseph had two sons with {his wife} Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, {who was} a priest in {the city of} On. ⁵¹Joseph named {his} oldest {son} Manasseh, {which means "forget,"} {and he explained,} "{It is} because God has helped me to forget {about} all my troubles and about {how much I have missed} my father and the rest of my family {back home}." ⁵²And he named {his} second son Ephraim, {which means "twice prosperous,"} {and he explained,} "{It is} because God has helped me to prosper in the country where I have suffered {so much}."

⁵³Finally the seven years were over when food was plentiful in the country of Egypt. ⁵⁴Then the seven years began when there was a severe lack of food, which is exactly what Joseph had predicted {would happen}. The famine spread to every country, but throughout the whole country of Egypt there was {still} food {in the storehouses}.

⁵⁵When everyone in Egypt became very hungry {because of the famine}, they begged {King} Pharaoh for food. So he commanded them, "Go ask Joseph {for help}, {and} do whatever he commands you {to do}." ⁵⁶Since the severe food shortage was affecting the whole country, Joseph {had his helpers} open up all the storehouses {full of grain}, and he started selling {the grain} to the people of Egypt. Then the famine became worse {and worse} throughout the country of Egypt. ⁵⁷In fact, {people from} all over the world started coming to Egypt to buy {grain} from Joseph, because the food shortage was {so} terrible throughout the whole world.

Chapter 42

Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt to Buy Grain

¹Meanwhile {back in the region of Canaan}, {when} Jacob heard that there was grain {for sale} in {the country of} Egypt, he told his sons, "Do not just {stand around} doing nothing! ²Listen {to this}! I heard that there is grain {for sale} in {the country of} Egypt. {So} go down there and buy {some} for us {and our families} {to eat}, so that we can stay alive and not starve to death." ³So Joseph's ten {older} brothers {left home and} traveled down to Egypt to buy {some} grain {there}. ⁴But Jacob did not allow Joseph's {younger} brother Benjamin to go {to Egypt} with {the rest of} his brothers, because Jacob was afraid that something bad might happen to him.

⁵Israel's sons arrived {in Egypt} along with {many} other people who were coming {there} to buy {food}, because the severe food shortage was {also} {affecting everyone} in the region of Canaan. ⁶{Since} Joseph {was} the administrator over the country {of Egypt}, he {was} the one selling {grain} to people {who came to him} from all over the country. So Joseph's brothers {also} went before him {like everyone else} and bowed down {with} {their} faces to the ground {to show him respect}. ⁷When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended that he did not {know} {them}. In fact, he spoke to them sternly and asked them, "What country are you from?" They answered {him}, "{Sir}, {we are} from the region of Canaan to buy {some} grain." ⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not realize who he was.

⁹Then Joseph remembered what he had dreamed about his brothers {long ago}, so he accused them, "You are secretly gathering information {about our country}! You came {here} to find out where {our} country is weak!"

¹⁰But his brothers replied to him, "Sir, we are not {spies}. Rather, {we are} humble men {who} have come {here} {only} to buy {some} grain. ¹¹We {are} all brothers who have the same father. We {are} humble, trustworthy men, not spies."

¹²But Joseph accused them, "{That is} not {true}! You have definitely come {here} to find out where {our} country is weak!" ¹³But they replied {to him}, "Sir, {there were} twelve of us brothers. We {are} sons of the same father {who lives} in the region of Canaan. {Our} youngest {brother} {is} with our father right now, but {our other} brother has died."

¹⁴But Joseph accused them, "What I told you is true! You are spying {on our country}! ¹⁵{So now,} this is how I will verify whether {or not} you {told me the truth}: As certain as {King} Pharaoh lives, {I swear that} you will {definitely} never leave Egypt until your youngest brother is here. ¹⁶{So} one of you must go {back home} and bring your {youngest} brother back {here}. {The rest of} you must stay here in prison. That way I can verify {whether} you told me the truth. But if you are lying, as certain as {King} Pharaoh lives, {that means} you really are spying {on our country}!" ¹⁷Then Joseph {had his soldiers} lock up his brothers in prison {for} three days.

¹⁸Three days later, Joseph said to them, "I am a man who reveres God. So if you do what I say, {I will let} you live.

¹⁹Since you {claim to be} trustworthy men, I will make {just} one of you brothers stay where you have been, in prison. {The rest of} you {may} go {and} carry food back {home} {for} your hungry families. ²⁰But you {must} bring your youngest brother {back} {here} to me. That way I will know that you are telling the truth, and I will let you live." So Joseph's brothers {agreed to} do what he said.

²¹{While they were still standing there,} they said to each other, "Surely what we did to our brother {Joseph} {long ago} was {very} wrong. We saw how he was suffering when he begged us {not to harm him}, but we refused to listen {to him}. That is why we are suffering now." ²²Reuben scolded them by saying, "I told you {that} you should not do anything bad to him! But you refused to listen {to me}, and now look, God is holding us responsible for causing him to die!" ²³Joseph's brothers did not realize that he {could} understand {what they were saying to each other}, because he had been speaking to them using a translator {as if he did not know their language}. ²⁴{When Joseph heard what they were saying,} he turned his back to them and started crying. Then {after he recovered,} he turned back around and spoke to them {again}. Then he chose Simeon from {among} them and {had his soldiers} bind him {with chains} while they watched.

²⁵Then Joseph told {his servants} to fill his brothers' sacks {with} grain. {He} also {told them} to {secretly} put in each brother's sack the money {they had paid for the grain} and to provide them {with} food to eat on their trip {home}. After Joseph did that for his brothers, ²⁶his brothers loaded their {sacks of} grain onto their donkeys' {backs} and started traveling {home}.

²⁷Later, {when they stopped} at a place to stay for the night, one {of them} opened his sack to get {some} grain to feed his donkey. There in the top of his sack he saw the money that he had used {to buy grain}! ²⁸So he exclaimed to the others, "Somebody has returned my money {to me}! Here it is in my sack!" {When they saw it,} they were {completely} shocked, and they shook {with fear}. They asked each other, "Why is God doing this to us?"

²⁹{When} they reached {their home in} the region of Canaan where their father Jacob was, they told him everything they had experienced. They said, ³⁰"The man who governs the country {of Egypt} spoke to us sternly and accused us of spying {on} {their} country! ³¹But we told him, 'We {are} trustworthy {men}; not spies. ³²{There were} twelve of us brothers, {and} {we are} the sons of the same father. One {of our brothers} has died, and the youngest {brother} {is} {at home} with our father right now in the region of Canaan.'

³³"But the man who governs the country told us, 'This is how I will know if you {are} trustworthy {men}: You must leave one of you {here} with me, and {the rest of you} go {home} with {food for} your starving families. ³⁴But bring your youngest brother {back} {here} to me. Then I will know that you {are} trustworthy {men} and not spies. {Then} I will return your brother to you {from prison}, and you can travel around my country {and trade} {freely}.' "

³⁵Then Joseph's brothers started emptying their sacks {of grain}, and there inside each man's sack was his bag of money {that he had paid for the grain}! {When} they and their father {Jacob} saw the {money} bags, they were terrified. ³⁶Then their father exclaimed to them, "You have caused me {terrible} loss! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And {now} you {want to} take Benjamin {away} {from me} {too}! Everything is going terribly for me!"

³⁷Reuben replied, "{Father,} let me be responsible for {taking} Benjamin {down to Egypt}. If I fail to bring him {back} to you {safely}, you can {punish me by} killing my two sons." ³⁸But his father replied, "{No,} I will not let my son {Benjamin} go down {to Egypt} with you. His brother is dead, so he is the only son {I have} left {from his mother}. So if anything bad happened to him on {your} journey, you would cause me, your elderly father, to grieve so badly that I would {die and} go down to the afterworld!"

Chapter 43

Joseph's Brothers, including Benjamin, Return to the Country of Egypt

¹The famine {continued to be} severe in the region {of Canaan}. ²So when Jacob and his family finished eating {all} the grain that his sons had brought from {the country of} Egypt, he said to them, "Go back {to Egypt} {and} buy some {more} grain for us {and our families}." ³But {his son} Judah replied to him, "The governor {there} sternly warned us that we cannot go to him {again} {to buy grain} if our {youngest} brother {is} not with us. ⁴{So} if you will allow our {youngest} brother to go with us, {then} we can go {to Egypt} and buy {more} grain for you.

⁵However if you refuse to let him go {with us}, we cannot go {there}, because the governor warned us that we cannot go to him {again} if our {youngest} brother {is} not with us."

⁶Then {their father} Israel asked {them}, "Why did you cause trouble for me by telling the governor that you have a younger brother?" ⁷They answered {him}, "The governor asked {us} many questions about ourselves and about our family. He asked {us} if our father was still alive and if we had {another} brother. We {just} answered his questions honestly. There is no way we could have known that he would require us to take our brother down {there} {to him}!"

⁸Then Judah urged his father Israel {about Benjamin}, "Entrust the young man to me {to take care of} so that we can go immediately {to Egypt} {to buy grain}. Then all of us, including our children, can survive and not starve to

death. ⁹I personally promise to keep him safe. You can hold me responsible for him, {so that} if I do not bring him {back} to you safely, I will be guilty of this sin against you for the rest of my life. ¹⁰{In any case,} if we had not waited {this long}, we could have made two {round} trips {there and back} by now." ¹¹Then their father Israel said to them, "Since that is how it must be, then do this: Put {some} of the best things from {our} land in your sacks, and take {them} to the governor {as} gifts. {Include} some healing salve, some honey, {some} spices and incense, {and} {some} pistachio nuts and almonds. ¹²{Also} take with you twice {as much} money {as you took the first time}, because you must take back the money that someone gave back {to you} in your sacks. Maybe they did that by mistake. ¹³So {now,} take your {youngest} brother and immediately go back to the governor. ¹⁴I pray that God {who is} all-powerful will cause him to treat you kindly so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come {back} {home} with you. But {if not, and} if I {must} lose them and grieve {for them}, {then} I {will} grieve."

¹⁵Then the brothers packed those gifts {in their sacks} along with twice as much money {as the grain would cost}. Then they {took} Benjamin {with them} and quickly traveled down to {the country of} Egypt and went directly to Joseph. ¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with his {other} brothers, he commanded his head house-servant, "Escort these men to {my} house. Then butcher a calf and prepare {a feast}, because {I want} them to eat with me {today} at noon."

¹⁷The servant did exactly what Joseph {had} told {him to do} and escorted the brothers to Joseph's house. ¹⁸But when the brothers {saw} that he had taken them to Joseph's house, they were afraid, and they said {to each other}, "He has taken us here because of {our} money that someone gave back to us in our sacks {on} {our} first trip {here}. {He intends} to {have his soldiers} attack us and overpower us and make us {his} servants, along with our donkeys!"

¹⁹Then they approached Joseph's head house-servant {outside} the door to {his} house to speak to him. ²⁰and said, "Excuse us, sir, one time before this, we traveled all the way down {here} {to Egypt} to buy {some} grain. ²¹But {on our way home,} when we arrived at the place where we lodged for the night, we opened our sacks. There in the top of each of our sacks {was} the money {we had paid to you} {for the grain}! The money was all there! So we brought it {all} back with us {to give to you}. ²²We have {also} brought more money with us so that we can buy {some more} grain {now}. We have no idea who put the money in our sacks." ²³But Joseph's servant replied {to them}, "It is all right, {so} do not worry {about it}. The God whom you and your father serve must have put the money in your sacks, {because} I {definitely} received your money {that you paid for the grain}." Then Joseph's servant brought Simeon out {of prison} to his brothers.

²⁴Then Joseph's servant brought the brothers into Joseph's house and provided {them} with water to wash {the road dust off} their feet. He also fed their donkeys. ²⁵{Meanwhile,} Joseph's brothers got {their} gifts ready to give to Joseph when he came home at noon, because they had heard that they were going to eat a meal {with him} there.

²⁶When Joseph came home, his brothers {gave} to him the gifts that they had brought with them into the house, and they bowed down before him {with their faces} to the ground {to show respect}. ²⁷Then Joseph asked them how they were doing, and he asked {them}, "Is your elderly father well whom you mentioned {to me}? Is he still living?" ²⁸They answered {him}, "{Yes sir,} our father, who highly respects you, is still alive and well." Then they bowed {their heads} and bowed down {to the ground} {again}.

²⁹Then Joseph looked around and saw his brother Benjamin, who had the same mother that he had, and he said {to them}, "So this must be your youngest brother whom you told me about." Then he said {to Benjamin}, "I pray that God will be kind to you, young man." ³⁰Suddenly Joseph rushed out {of the room} because he felt overwhelmed with emotions about his brother and was about to cry. So he went to his bedroom, where he cried {privately}.

³¹After he had gotten control of his emotions {and stopped crying}, he washed {the tears off} his face and came back out {of his room}. Then he commanded {his servants}, "Serve the food {to us}." ³²So they served {food} to Joseph at his own table, and his brothers at their own table, and the Egyptians who were eating with him at their own table. Egyptians do not eat at the same table as Hebrew people, because Egyptians consider it unacceptable

{to do that}. ³³Joseph's brothers were sitting {at a table} facing his table in the order of their ages, from the oldest to the youngest. {When they noticed that,} they were amazed {and stared} at one another. ³⁴Then Joseph {had his servants} serve food to his brothers from his table, but he {had them} serve Benjamin five times more {food} than {they} served to any of the rest {of his brothers}. Then his brothers feasted and drank {wine} freely with him.

Chapter 44

Joseph Tests His Brothers

¹Later Joseph ordered his head house-servant, "Fill the men's {grain} bags with as much grain as they can take {with them}, and in the top of their bags, put the money that each {of them} paid {for the grain}. ²Also put my silver cup in the top of the youngest {one}'s bag, along with the money that he paid for the grain." So the servant did exactly what Joseph had ordered {him to do}.

³Early the next morning, {Joseph} sent the brothers {on their way}, along with their donkeys. ⁴{But} they had not gone very far out of the city when he ordered his head servant, "Hurry {and} pursue those men. When you catch up with them, ask them, 'Why have you treated {my master} so badly {after he was} so good {to you}?' ⁵The cup {you stole} is {the cup} that my master drinks from. He {also} uses it to find out secret things! What you have done is {very} wrong!" "

⁶Then the servant {left, and when he} caught up with the men, he repeated to them what Joseph had told him {to say}. ⁷But they replied, "Sir, why do you say such things? {We assure you,} sir, {that} we would never do anything like that! ⁸Remember that we returned to you the money that we discovered in our {grain} bags {last time}. {We brought it} {all the way} from {our home in} the region of Canaan! So we would never steal silver {things} or gold {things} {or anything else} from your master's house! ⁹{In fact,} sir, if you find that one of us does have the cup, then {you may} execute that person, and {the rest of} us, sir, will become your slaves."

¹⁰Joseph's servant replied {to them}, "Okay then, I will do as you suggest {except for this}: The one whom I find with my master's cup {is the only one who} will become my slave. {The rest of} you will be innocent {and free to go}."

¹¹So each of the brothers quickly took his {grain} bag {off his donkey} and put it on the ground, and each of them opened his {own} bag. ¹²Then Joseph's servant searched {their bags}. He started with the oldest {brother} and continued until he came to the youngest {brother}, and {there} he found the cup in Benjamin's bag! ¹³In response {to that}, the brothers tore their clothes {in distress}. Then each {of them} put his bag {back} on his {own} donkey, and they {all} {turned around and} went back to the city.

¹⁴When Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house, Joseph was there {waiting for them}. So they prostrated themselves on the ground before him {to show respect}. ¹⁵Then Joseph exclaimed to them, "What you have done is terrible! You should have known that someone in my position knows how to discover the secret things {that people do}!" ¹⁶Judah replied {to him}, "Sir, there is nothing {convincing} that we can say {to you}. There is no way that we can explain {this}. There is no way we can prove {to you} that we are innocent. God is punishing us for our {past} sin. {So now,} sir, we are {all} here to be your slaves, including {the one} whom {your house-servant} found with your cup {in his bag}." ¹⁷But Joseph told {them}, "{No,} I would never {even} consider doing such a thing! {Rather} {only} the man whom {my servant} found with my cup {in his bag} will be my slave. {The rest of} you are free to go {back} home to your father."

Judah Begs Joseph to Set Benjamin Free

¹⁸Then Judah approached Joseph and said {to him}, "Please, sir, I humbly ask you to let me speak freely to you. Please do not be angry with me, {especially} since you {are} as {powerful as} {King} Pharaoh {himself}. ¹⁹Sir, {previously} you asked us if our father was {still} alive and if we had {any other} brothers. ²⁰And we told you, sir, {that} we have an elderly father and {also} a younger brother who was born when our father was {already} old.

That brother's mother only had one other son, who is now dead. So our father {especially} loves our youngest brother.

²¹"Then you told us, sir, to bring our youngest brother {here} to you, so that you could see him for yourself. ²²But we told you, sir, that the young man should not leave his father {and come here}, because if he did, his father would die {from anxiety}. ²³But then, sir, you told us {that} unless our youngest brother came with us, we could never see you again.

²⁴"When we returned {home} to our father, who highly respects you, we reported to him what you told {us}.

²⁵{Months} later our father told {us}, 'Go back {to Egypt} {and} buy some {more} grain for us.' ²⁶But we replied {to him}, 'We cannot go {there} unless our youngest brother is with us. Then we can go. The governor {who sells grain there} will not allow us to see him {again} if our youngest brother is not with us.' ²⁷Then our father said to us, 'As you know, my wife {Rachel} and I {only} had two {sons} together. ²⁸One {of her sons} left here {one day}, and I have not seen him since then. I am sure that {a wild animal} must have {killed him and} torn him apart. ²⁹So if you also take her other son {away} from me, and anything harms him, you will cause me, your gray-haired father, so much grief that I will {die and} go down to the afterworld.

³⁰"So now, {sir}, if we go {home} to our father without his youngest son, since our father's life depends on his son's life, ³¹if he sees that his son is gone, he will die! {Yes,} we will cause our gray-haired father so much grief that he will {die and} go to the afterworld! ³²Besides that, sir, I promised my father that I would return his son to him safely. I told {him} that if I did not bring his son {back} to him, I would be guilty of sinning against him forever.

³³"So then, sir, I beg you to let me stay {here} and be your slave in place of our youngest {brother}, and let him go back {home} with his {other} brothers. ³⁴There is no way I can go back to my father if his youngest {son} is not with me! I could not bear to see how terribly my father would suffer!"

Chapter 45

Joseph Reveals Who He Is to His Brothers

¹{When Joseph heard that,} he could no {longer} keep himself from crying in front of all his servants, so he shouted {to them}, "All of you leave my presence!" {Immediately the servants left the room,} so that no one else was with Joseph when he told his brothers who he was. ²But he started crying so loudly that {many} Egyptians heard {him}, including Pharaoh's family. ³Then he exclaimed to his brothers {in their language}, "I {am} {your brother} Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But Joseph's brothers could not reply to him, because they felt very afraid to be standing in front of him.

⁴So Joseph said to them, "Please come here next to me." After they went closer {to him}, he said {to them}, "I {really am} your brother Joseph, whom you sold {to be a slave} in {the country of} Egypt. ⁵But now, do not be upset or angry with yourselves for selling me, because {it was actually} God {who} sent me {here} before you came, to save {many people's} lives. ⁶For two years {now} {there has been} a famine throughout this region, and for another five years {it will be so severe that} no one will {be able to} plant {seeds} or harvest {crops}. ⁷That is why God sent me {here} before you came, to save your lives in this amazing way so that you will survive and have descendants on the earth. ⁸So then, you {were} not {the ones} {who} caused me to come here, but {rather} {it was} God {who sent me}. He has {also} made me {like a} father to {King} Pharaoh, so that I am the one in charge of his entire household and {also} the governor over the entire country of Egypt.

⁹"Hurry back to our father and tell him that his son Joseph has sent him this message: 'God has appointed me governor over the entire {country of} Egypt. {So} {please} come down {here} {to live} near me, {and} do not delay.

¹⁰You can live in Goshen Province. That way you will live close to me with your children and your grandchildren, along with your flocks {of sheep and goats}, your herds {of cattle} and everything {else} that you own. ¹¹I will take

care of you there, since the famine will last five {more} years. {Please come} so that {the famine} will not cause you and your family to lose everything you own {and die}.”’

¹²{Then Joseph said to his brothers,} “Look! {All of} you, including my brother Benjamin, {can} see that {it really is} me, {Joseph,} who is talking to you. ¹³So {go and} tell our father all {about} how powerful I am in Egypt and {about} everything {else} that you have seen {here}. Then quickly bring him down here {to me}.”

¹⁴Then Joseph hugged his brother Benjamin {tightly} and cried {for joy}, and Benjamin {also} cried as he hugged Joseph. ¹⁵Then Joseph kissed all his brothers {on their cheeks} as he continued to cry {for joy}. After {he did} that, his brothers started talking with him.

¹⁶When Pharaoh’s household heard the news that Joseph’s brothers had come {there}, Pharaoh and {all} his servants were happy. ¹⁷So Pharaoh told Joseph, “Give your brothers this message {from me}: ‘Load your donkeys {with grain} and go quickly {back} to Canaan. ¹⁸Then bring your father and your families {back} {here} to me. I will give you the best {area} in the country of Egypt {to live in}, so that you will live well with the best of everything in the country.’

¹⁹{Then Pharaoh said to Joseph,} “I also want you {to tell them} to take {some of} {my} wagons with them from the country of Egypt for their wives and {young} children {to travel in}. Then {tell them} to bring their father {back} {here to live}. ²⁰They should not worry about {leaving some of} their belongings {behind}, because the best {things} in all the country of Egypt {will be} theirs.”

²¹So Israel’s sons {agreed to} do that. Then Joseph gave them wagons {to use} as {King} Pharaoh had commanded, and he supplied them with food to eat as they traveled {home}. ²²He {also} gave a {new} set of clothes to each one of his brothers, but to Benjamin he gave five {new} sets of clothes and 300 {pieces} of silver {money}. ²³He also gave {them} the following gifts to give to his father: ten male donkeys that were carrying {some of} the best {things} from Egypt, and ten female donkeys that were carrying grain, bread, and {other} food for him {and his family} to eat as they traveled {to Egypt}. ²⁴Then Joseph sent his brothers off {on their way home}. As they were leaving, he told them, “Do not argue {with each other} on the way.”

²⁵Then Joseph’s brothers left Egypt and traveled {home} to their father Jacob in the region of Canaan. ²⁶{When they arrived,} they announced to him, “Joseph {is} still alive! In fact, he {is} the governor over the entire country of Egypt!” {When their father heard that news,} he was stunned {and silent}, because he could not believe them. ²⁷But {after} they told him everything that Joseph had said to them, and {after} he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him {and his family} {to Egypt}, he recovered {from the shock}. ²⁸Then he exclaimed {to them}, “{That’s} enough! {It must be true!} My son Joseph really is alive! I must go {now} and see him {again} before I die.”

Chapter 46

Jacob and His Family Move to {the Country of} Egypt

¹So Israel {and his family} started traveling {toward Egypt} with all their belongings. When they reached {the city of} Beersheba, he offered some of his animals {on an altar} {there} as sacrifices to God, whom his father Isaac had worshiped. ²During the night God called to Israel in a vision, “Jacob! Jacob!” Jacob replied, “Yes, {Lord}?” ³Then God said {to him}, “I {am} God, the God whom your father worshiped. Don’t be afraid of moving down to {the country of} Egypt, because I will make your descendants {multiply and} become a large people group {while they live} there. ⁴I will personally go with you down to Egypt {and take care of you there}. Later I will definitely bring your descendants {back} {here to Canaan}. When you die, Joseph will be with you.”

⁵After that, Jacob left {the city of} Beersheba, and his sons took him and their wives and children in the wagons that {King} Pharaoh had provided for them to ride in {to Egypt}. ⁶They {also} brought {with them} their livestock and their {other} belongings that they had gotten in the region of Canaan. Then Jacob and all of his descendants

arrived in Egypt. ⁷He brought his entire {extended} family with him to Egypt, {including} his sons and daughters, {and} his grandsons and granddaughters.

⁸Here is a list of the names of Israel's descendants who came {with him} to Egypt, {that is, the names of} Jacob's descendants: Reuben, {who was} his oldest {son}, ⁹and Reuben's sons, {who were} Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. ¹⁰{Simeon and} Simeon's sons, {who were} Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul, who had a Canaanite mother. ¹¹{Levi and} Levi's sons, {who were} Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ¹²{Judah and} Judah's sons, {who were} Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; actually, Er and Onan had {already} died in the region of Canaan. Perez's sons were Hezron and Hamul. ¹³{Issachar and} Issachar's sons, {who were} Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron. ¹⁴{Zebulun and} Zebulun's sons, {who were} Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. ¹⁵Those {were} the sons {and grandsons} whom Jacob and {his wife} Leah had together in {the region of} Paddan Aram. {They} also {had} a daughter {named} Dinah. The total number of those descendants {was} thirty-three.

¹⁶{Jacob's other descendants who came with him included} {his son Gad and} Gad's sons, {who were} Zipzion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷{He also took} {his son Asher and} Asher's sons, {who were} Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and their sister Serah. Beriah's sons {were} Heber and Malkiel. ¹⁸Those {were} the children {and grandchildren} {that Jacob had} with Zilpah, {who was the servant woman} that Laban had given to his daughter Leah. {Those descendants that} Zilpah and Jacob had together {totaled} sixteen persons.

¹⁹The sons that Jacob had with his wife Rachel {were} Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰Joseph's {sons} who were born in {the country of} Egypt {were} Manasseh and Ephraim. Their mother was {Joseph's wife} Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, {who was} the priest at {the city of} On. ²¹Benjamin's sons {were} Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. ²²Those {were} the sons {and grandsons} whom Jacob and {his wife} Rachel had together, a total of fourteen descendants.

²³{Other descendants who came with Jacob included:} {his son Dan and} Dan's son Hushim. ²⁴{Naphtali and} Naphtali's sons, {who were} Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. ²⁵Those {were all} the sons {and grandsons} that Jacob had with Bilhah, {the servant woman} whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel. The total number of those descendants {was} seven.

²⁶Altogether Jacob had sixty-six blood relatives who went with him to Egypt. That {number} does not include {his wives or} his sons' wives. ²⁷{If you include} {Jacob, Joseph, and} Joseph's two sons, who were born in Egypt, {then} there was a total of seventy members of Jacob's family in Egypt.

Jacob Reunites with His Son Joseph and Meets {King} Pharaoh

²⁸{When they reached Egypt,} Jacob had Judah go to Joseph ahead of them to get directions {from him} to Goshen {Province}. After that, Jacob's family traveled to Goshen. ²⁹Then Joseph got his chariot ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. {There} Joseph greeted his father and hugged him {tightly} and cried {for joy} on his shoulder {for} a long time. ³⁰Then Israel exclaimed to Joseph, "Now when I die {I will be at peace}, because I have seen you in person {and know} that you are still alive!"

³¹Then Joseph announced to his brothers and {the rest of} his father's family, "I will go to {King} Pharaoh and inform him, 'My brothers and {the rest of} my father's family have traveled {here} from the region of Canaan to live near me. ³²The men {of my family} raise sheep {and goats}. In fact, they raise {all kinds of} livestock {for a living}, and they have brought {with them} {all} their sheep {and goats} and cattle, and everything {else} that they own.' ³³So then, when the king summons you and asks {you} what your occupation is, ³⁴you should tell {him}, 'Sir, ever since the time we were young until now, we have been raising livestock, {which is} the same occupation that our ancestors had.' That way {he will allow} you to live {separately} in Goshen Province, {especially} since Egyptians despise everyone who raises sheep."

Chapter 47

¹So Joseph went to {King} Pharaoh and informed {him}, "My father and my brothers {and their families} have come {to Egypt} from the region of Canaan and {are} now in Goshen Province. {They brought with them} their sheep, {goats,} cattle, and everything {else} that they own." ²Then Joseph brought five of his brothers before Pharaoh and introduced them {to him}. ³Then Pharaoh asked them, "What {is} your occupation?" They answered him, "Your Majesty, we raise sheep {for a living}, just like our ancestors did." ⁴They {also} said to him, "We have come {here} to live for a while in {your} country. The famine is so severe In the region of Canaan {where we come from} that there is not enough grass {in the fields} for our flocks. So then, sir, please let us live in Goshen Province."

⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "{Now that} your father and brothers have come {to live} near you, ⁶you may choose any part of the land of Egypt {for them to live in}. {In fact,} they may live in the best land {in the country}, in Goshen Province. And if you know that some of them are especially talented {at raising livestock}, then put them in charge of raising my livestock {also}."

⁷Then Joseph took his father Jacob and introduced him to {King} Pharaoh, and Jacob {asked God to} bless Pharaoh.

⁸Then Pharaoh asked Jacob, "{Sir,} how old are you now?" ⁹Jacob answered him, "I have been living {in this world} for 130 years. My life has been short, with many hardships. In fact, I have not lived {nearly} as long as my ancestors did during their time on earth." ¹⁰Then Jacob {again} {asked God to} bless Pharaoh and left him.

¹¹After that, Joseph did what Pharaoh had told him {to do}: He helped his father and brothers settle in the country of Egypt. He gave them the choicest property {in Egypt}, which was in {Goshen Province, also known as} Rameses Province. ¹²Joseph {also} provided his father and brothers and all {the rest of} his father's family {with} as much food as {each family} needed to feed {all} the people in their family.

How Joseph Ruled Egypt During the Rest of the Famine

¹³Now {after a while,} the famine became so severe in the entire world that there was very little food {available} {anywhere}. {The people of} the country of Egypt and the region of Canaan were suffering badly because they did not have enough to eat. ¹⁴So they bought grain from Joseph until there was no more money left in the country of Egypt or the region of Canaan. Joseph {had his servants} take the money to Pharaoh's palace. ¹⁵When {the people in} Egypt and Canaan had spent all their money, {people from} all over Egypt went to Joseph and begged {him}, "{Sir,} we have no more money! Please give us food so that we do not starve to death!" ¹⁶Joseph responded, "Since your money is gone, bring {me} your livestock to pay for the food that I will give you." ¹⁷So the people brought their livestock to Joseph. They gave him {their} horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys to pay for the food that he gave them. In that way Joseph supplied the people with food that year, {and they gave him} all their livestock {to pay} for it.

¹⁸After that year was over, the people went to Joseph {again} in the following year and pleaded with him, "Sir, as you know, {our} money is gone and {all} {our} livestock {belong} to you. The only way we can pay you {for food} is to give you our farmland and work for you, sir. ¹⁹Please do not {just} watch us die or let our land {become} wasteland. {Instead,} {please} take us and our land {in exchange} for food. Then we will be {King} Pharaoh's slaves, and our land {will also be his}. {Please} give {us} seeds {to plant} so that we can stay alive and not {starve} to death, and {so that} the land will not become a desert!"

²⁰So Joseph {agreed and} acquired all the land in {the country of} Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold their fields {to him} {in exchange for food}, because the food shortage was {so} severe. In that way, {all} the land became Pharaoh's {property}. ²¹Joseph {also} relocated the people to the cities throughout the entire {country of} Egypt. ²²The only land that he did not buy was the priests' {land}, because they regularly received a certain amount {of food} from Pharaoh, and they had enough to eat from what he gave to them. That is why they did not {need to} sell their land {to buy food}.

²³Next Joseph announced to the {Egyptian} people, "Listen, now that you and your farmland belong to {King} Pharaoh, here {are} {some} seeds for you so that you can plant {them in} the fields. ²⁴Then every harvest season, you must give him one-fifth {of the crops you harvest}. The rest {of what you harvest} will be yours {to use} to plant {in} the fields and as food for you and your families, including your children." ²⁵The people replied {to him}, "You have saved our lives! Please {continue to} be kind to us, sir, and we will {agree to} be {King} Pharaoh's servants." ²⁶So Joseph made a law {that required} {people to give} to Pharaoh one-fifth {of all the crops they harvested} from the fields in Egypt. {That law} is still {in effect} today. The priests' land was the only {land} {in Egypt} that did not belong to Pharaoh.

Jacob Asks His Son Joseph to Bury His Body in the Land of Canaan

²⁷Now {Jacob, whose other name was} Israel, was living {with his family} in Goshen Province in the country of Egypt, and they acquired {many possessions} there. They had many children and became very numerous. ²⁸{After} Jacob had lived in the country of Egypt {for} seventeen years, he was 147 years old. ²⁹{When} it was almost time for him to die, he summoned his son Joseph and urged him, "Please do this favor for me: Put your hand under my leg, and {promise me that} {after I die,} you will be kind and faithful to me. Please {promise that} you will not bury my body {here} in {the country of} Egypt. ³⁰Rather, after I die and join my ancestors {who have died}, take my body out of Egypt {to the region of Canaan} and bury it in the same burial place where their bodies are." Joseph promised {him}, "I will do what you requested." ³¹But his father insisted, "Vow to me {before God} {that you will do it}." So Joseph vowed {that he would do it}. Then {his father} Israel bowed {down} {to worship God} beside {his} bed.

Chapter 48

Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons Ephraim and Manasseh

¹{Some time} after those things happened, {someone} told Joseph, "Listen, your father is sick." So Joseph {went to visit his father and} took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. ²{When they got there,} someone informed Jacob, "Look, your son Joseph has come to visit you." {Immediately} Israel exerted himself and sat up at {the head of} {his} bed {and they greeted each other}. ³Then Jacob told Joseph, "God {who is} all-powerful appeared to me {long ago} in the region of Canaan at {the town of} Luz. He blessed me {there} ⁴by saying to me, 'Listen, I will give you many descendants who will increase {in number} and become many people groups. I will {also} give this land to your descendants to own forever.' "

⁵Then Jacob said to Joseph, "Now then, your two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you {here} in the country of Egypt before I joined you here, {I will treat as} my sons, just like my sons Reuben and Simeon. ⁶If you have any more children, they will be yours, {so that} what they inherit {from me} will be some of what their brothers {Ephraim and Manasseh} inherit {from me}. ⁷I {am doing this because} as our family was returning {home} from {the region of} Paddan {Aram}, {your mother} Rachel died beside me in the region of Canaan while we were still traveling and some distance away from {the town of} Ephrath. {As you know,} I buried her body there by the road that goes to Ephrath, which {now has the name} Bethlehem."

⁸Then Israel noticed Joseph's {two} sons and asked {him}, "Who {are} these {young men}?" ⁹Joseph answered him, "These {are} my sons whom God gave to me here {in Egypt}." Then Israel said {to Joseph}, "Please bring them {closer} to me so that I can {ask God to} bless them." ¹⁰Now Israel was almost blind because of old age, {so that} he could not see {very clearly}. So Joseph took his sons {closer} to his father, and his father kissed them {on the cheeks} and hugged them. ¹¹Then Israel exclaimed to Joseph, "I never thought I would see you {again}, but {now} look, God has even let me meet your children!" ¹²Then Joseph had his sons move away from beside his father's knees, and he bowed {before his father} and touched the ground with his forehead {to show him respect}.

¹³Then he brought his sons close to his father {again}. He had Ephraim stand in front of Israel's left {side}, and he had Manasseh stand in front of Israel's right {side}. ¹⁴But Israel {intentionally} reached out his right hand and put

{it} on Ephraim's head, even though Ephraim {was} {Joseph's} younger {son}. Then he crossed his arms and {put} his left hand on Manasseh's head, {even} though Manasseh {was} {Joseph's} oldest {son}. ¹⁵Then Israel blessed Joseph {and his sons} by saying,

"I pray that the God whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac served {will bless your sons}.

He is the God who has taken care of me my entire life.

¹⁶{He is also} the Angel who saved me {continually} from every harm.

I pray that he will cause {these} young men to prosper {greatly},

so that my family line and the family line of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac will continue through them

and so that they will have many descendants on the earth."

¹⁷{When} Joseph noticed that his father had put his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it was a mistake. So he took hold of his father's hand {in order} to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸Then he said to his father, "That is the wrong son, Father. The other {one} {is} {my} oldest son. {So} {you need to} have your right hand on his head." ¹⁹But his father would not {move his hands} and replied, "I know {it}, my son, I know {what I am doing}. {In fact,} your oldest son will also be a great man, and he will become {the ancestor of} a people group. However, his younger brother will be {even} greater than he {will be}, and his {younger} brother's descendants will become many people groups." ²⁰So Israel blessed Ephraim and Manasseh that day by saying {to them},

"{The people of} Israel will use your names when they bless {people} and say,

'May God prosper you like {he prospered} Ephraim and Manasseh.' "

In that way, Israel made Ephraim greater than Manasseh.

²¹After that, Israel {turned} to Joseph {and} said {to him}, "As you can see, I am about to die, but God will {always} be with you and your brothers {and all your descendants} {to help you}. He will also take you back to the land that {he gave} to your ancestors. ²²Besides that, {as part of your inheritance from me,} I {hereby} give you {the city of} Shechem, {which} I captured from the Amorite{s} when I defeated them in battle. This is more {land} than I am giving to your brothers."

Chapter 49

Jacob's Last Words to His Twelve Sons

¹Then Jacob summoned {all} his sons. He said {to them}, "Come together {here}, so that I can tell you what will happen to you {and your descendants} in the years ahead.

²My sons, gather around {me,} {your father} Jacob, and listen {to me}.

{I,} your father Israel, have something {important} to tell you.

³"Reuben, you {are} my oldest {son},

{the result of} my strength and the first child I had as a young man.

{You had} high status and great authority {in our family}.

⁴{However,} {you are} unstable like {rushing} water, {so} you will no longer have your important status {in our family},

because you got {into} my bed {with my concubine}
{and} dishonored me! You {actually} climbed {into} my couch!

⁵"Simeon and Levi, {you are} partners.

You use your swords to do violent things {together}.

⁶I will never participate with you when you plan {evil} things!

I refuse to make {evil} plans with you,
because you became angry and murdered {many} people,
and {just} to entertain yourselves you crippled {some} cattle.

⁷May God curse you for being so fiercely angry
and malicious!

I {ask God to} scatter you {and your descendants} among {the descendants of} Jacob.
That's right, I {ask him to} scatter you throughout {the land of} Israel.

⁸"Judah, your brothers {and their descendants} will {highly} praise you {and your descendants}.

You will conquer your enemies.

{Then} my {other} sons will prostrate themselves before you {and your descendants} {in respect}.

⁹Judah, my son, {you are} {powerful} {like} a young lion

that has returned {to its den} after {killing} {its} prey.

It stretches out {and} lies down {to sleep}.

No one dares to disturb that lion.

¹⁰Judah, there will always be one of your descendants ruling as king.

In fact, your descendants will rule

until the {highest} king comes

and the peoples {of the earth} obey him.

¹¹You {and your descendants} will {be so wealthy that you could} tie your donkey{s} to {your} {grape}vine{s} {to eat the valuable fruit}.

{It will not matter if} your donkeys' colts eat {your} best {grapevine} branch{es}.

{You will still have so much wine from other vines

that} you could {even} use it like water to wash your clothes.

¹²{Your} eyes {will be} bright from {drinking} {abundant} wine,
and {your} teeth {will be} white from {drinking} {abundant} milk.

13“Zebulun, {you} {and your descendants} will live near the coast,
where there will be a {safe} harbor for ships.
Your territory {will extend} as far {north} as {the city of} Sidon.

14Issachar, {you} {and your descendants} {will be} {like} a sturdy donkey
{that is} resting {on the ground} between two loads.

15You will have a good place to rest,
in a land that is pleasant,
but you will work hard and carry {heavy loads}.
You will have to work {very} hard {for others} as slaves.

16“Dan, you {and your descendants} will rule your {own} people group
and have equal status with {the rest of} the tribes of Israel.

17You will be {like} a poisonous snake
{lying} beside a road
that strikes the feet of {its enemy's} horse,
so that {it rears up and} the enemy falls off backward {to the ground}.”

18{Then Jacob paused and exclaimed,} “Yahweh, I am looking expectantly to you to save {me}!”

19{Then he continued,} “{As for you,} Gad, a group of robbers will attack you {and your descendants},
but you will chase them {and defeat them}.

20“Asher, {you} {and your descendants} will {be wealthy and} eat the best food.
In fact, you will produce delicious foods {that are fit} for kings {to eat}.

21“Naphtali, {you} {and your descendants} {will be} {swift} {like} a deer that is free to run wherever it wants.
You will {also} speak eloquently.

22“Joseph, {you} {and your descendants} {will become} very numerous {like} {fruit on} a productive {tree}

{that is growing} next to a stream {of water},
{with} branches {full of fruit} that hang over a {nearby} wall.

²³Enemy warriors will {fiercely} attack you {and your descendants}
and shoot {arrows} {at you} and try to destroy you.

²⁴But the Mighty {God} whom I worship will keep you strong
and help you use your weapons well {as you fight back}.
He takes care of {his people} the way a shepherd takes care of his sheep.
{He is} {like} a rock {fortress} who protects Israel {and his descendants}.

²⁵{That strength/power comes} from the God {who has always taken care} of {me,} your father.
He is the all-powerful {God} who will help you {and your descendants}
and bless you {all} {with} rain from above
and water from deep in the ground.
He will {also} bless {you} with many children {and much livestock}.

²⁶{God} has blessed me more
than he blessed my ancestors.
{He has blessed me with riches that are} greater than the riches {that come} from the ancient mountains.
I pray that {God} will abundantly bless {you too,} Joseph,
as the one he chose to set apart {and honor} above your brothers.

²⁷"Benjamin {you and your descendants} {will be} {like} a fierce wolf.
You will always defeat your enemies
and take their possessions and wealth."

²⁸Those {twelve sons} {are} {the ancestors of} the twelve tribes that descended from Israel, and those {were} the blessings that their father spoke to them. He blessed each one of them with blessings that were appropriate for them {and their descendants}.

Jacob Dies and Is Buried

²⁹Then Jacob instructed his sons by saying to them, "I am about to {die and} join my ancestors {who have already died}. Bury my body next to their {bodies} inside the cave that {is} in the field that Ephron the Hittite used to own.
³⁰That cave and field are in the Machpelah {area} that is near {the city of} Mamre in the region of Canaan. {That is the cave} that {my grandfather} Abraham bought, along with the field, from Ephron the Hittite, in order to have a place to bury {his dead relatives}. ³¹That is where {the bodies of} Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried, {and} where {the bodies of} Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried, and that is where I buried {the body of} {my wife} Leah. ³²{Abraham} bought that field and cave from the Hittites." ³³When Jacob had finished giving those instructions to his sons, he {lay down and} pulled his feet {up} into {his} bed. Then he took his last breath {and died} and joined his ancestors {who had died before him}.

Chapter 50

¹Then Joseph hugged his father {in sorrow}, and he cried over him and kissed him {goodbye} {on the cheek}. ²Then he ordered his doctors who served him to prepare his father's body for burial. So they did that. ³The process took forty days, which is how long it {normally} takes to prepare a body. The people in Egypt mourned for Israel {for} seventy days.

⁴After that time of mourning Israel's death, Joseph said to Pharaoh's officials, "Please do this favor for me: please take a message to {King} Pharaoh {for me} and tell {him} ⁵that when my father was about to die, he had me vow to him that I would bury his body in the region of Canaan, in a tomb that he had prepared for himself there. So {ask the king to} please let me go {to Canaan} and bury my father's body {there}. After that, I will come back {here}."

⁶{When Pharaoh heard Joseph's message,} he replied, "{Tell Joseph that} he may go {to Canaan} and bury his father's body just as his father made him vow {that he would do}."

⁷So Joseph started the trip {to Canaan} to bury his father's body, and all Pharaoh's officials escorted him, {including} the important leaders from Pharaoh's court and all the {other} important leaders in the country of Egypt. ⁸All of Joseph's family also {went with him,} including his brothers and {the rest of} his father's family. They only left {behind} their children and their livestock in Goshen Province. ⁹{Many} soldiers also escorted Joseph, {including} those {who were} riding chariots and those {who were} riding horses, so that the {entire} group was very large.

¹⁰They traveled to the other side of the Jordan {River} and stopped at a {grain} threshing place owned by {a man named} Atad. There Joseph {and the others} mourned for his father very loudly and sorrowfully for seven days.

¹¹When the Canaanites who lived in the area saw them mourning {like that} at Atad's threshing place, they exclaimed {to each other}, "{Wow!} Those people from Egypt are mourning {very} sorrowfully {for someone who died}!" That is why the name of that place on the other side of the Jordan {River} is Abel Mizraim, {which means} "Egyptians' mourning place."

¹²Jacob's sons did {everything} for him just as he had instructed them {to do}: ¹³They took his body to the region of Canaan and buried it in the cave {that is} in the field in the Machpelah {area}, near {the city of} Mamre. {It was} the field {and cave} that Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite as a place to bury his dead {relatives}. ¹⁴After Joseph buried his father's body, he returned to {the country of} Egypt, along with his brothers and everyone {else} who had accompanied him to his father's funeral.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers That He Has Forgiven Them

¹⁵Now that their father was no longer alive, Joseph's brothers {were worried and} said {to each other}, "If Joseph is angry at us for the terrible way that we treated him, he might punish us severely for what we did." ¹⁶So they sent {a messenger} to Joseph to tell {him}, "Before our father died, he told {us} ¹⁷to ask you to please forgive {us}, your brothers, for sinning {against you} and treating you so badly. So then, as servants of God whom our father worshiped, we beg you to forgive us for sinning {against you}." When Joseph heard his brothers' message to him, he {was very sad and} cried. ¹⁸Then his brothers came {to him}, prostrated themselves before him {to show respect}, and said {to him}, "Here we are, we {will be} your servants!" ¹⁹But Joseph replied to them, "You do not need to be afraid. After all, I am not God! {So I have no right to punish you.} ²⁰{It is true that} you planned to harm me, {but} God is using that to benefit {us all}. Right now he is doing what he planned, to keep many people from dying. ²¹So then, you do not need to be afraid. I {myself} will provide {everything} that you and your children need." In that way, Joseph assured them {that he had forgiven them}, and he {also} said {other} things to encourage them.

Joseph Dies in Egypt

²²Joseph continued to live in {the country of} Egypt, along with {the rest of} his father {Jacob}'s family, until he was 110 years old. ²³He lived {long enough} to see {his son} Ephraim's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The children of {his grandson} Machir, {who was} Manasseh's son, also grew up during his lifetime.

²⁴Then {one day} Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will definitely help you and take you {and your descendants} from this country to the land that he vowed {to give} to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵When God does that, you must take my body back {to Canaan} {with you} {and bury it there}." Then Joseph had {his brothers and} {the rest of} the descendants of Israel vow {that they would do that}.

²⁶So Joseph died at the age of 110 years. Then his doctors prepared his body for burial, and they put it in a burial box in {the country of} Egypt.

Exodus

Chapter 1

¹These are the names of Israel's sons who went into Egypt with Jacob and their families: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, ³Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, ⁴Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵{At that time}, Jacob had 70 total descendants (including Joseph {and his sons} who were already in Egypt.) ⁶{After some time,} Joseph and his brothers and everyone else in their family who lived at that time died. ⁷{Jacob's} descendants gave birth to many children. The number of his descendants grew, and they became extremely strong. {As a result, there were so many of them that} they were everywhere in Egypt.

⁸{However, sometime later,} a new king began to rule in Egypt. He did not know about {all the good things} Joseph {had done for the people of Egypt}. ⁹He said to his people, "Look {at what has happened}! There are so many Israelites that they outnumber us Egyptians! ¹⁰We must find a way to control them! If we do not do that, there will be more of them. Then, if enemies attack us, the Israelites will join with our enemies and fight against us, and they will escape from our land." ¹¹So the king and his officials put masters over groups of Israelite workers to cause them to suffer very much by making them work very hard. So the Israelites built the cities Pithom and Rameses to store goods for the king. ¹²But the more the Egyptians treated the Israelites badly, the more the Israelites had children, and the more they spread throughout Egypt. Therefore, the Egyptians were distressed because of the Israelites. ¹³The Egyptians ruthlessly made the Israelites work ¹⁴and made their lives miserable by forcing them to work hard. The Israelites built with bricks and mortar and did all sorts of agricultural work. The Egyptians ruthlessly gave them all sorts of work.

¹⁵Now there were two Hebrew midwives named Shiphrah and Puah. The king of Egypt said to them, ¹⁶"When you help a Hebrew woman have a baby, pay attention right as the baby is born. If the baby is a boy, you must kill him. If the baby is a girl, you may let her live." ¹⁷But the midwives were afraid {to disobey} God. So they did not obey what the king told them to do. They allowed the baby boys to live. ¹⁸So the king summoned the two midwives and asked them, "Why are you doing this? Why are you letting the baby boys live?"

¹⁹One of the midwives replied to the king, "{We have not been able to obey you} because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. Because they are energetic, the Hebrew women have their babies before we arrive to help them."

²⁰{Therefore, the {Hebrew} people became numerous and very strong.} God acted kindly to the midwives

²¹because they were afraid {to disobey} him. He gave them each a husband and children.

²²Then the king ordered all the Egyptian people, "Throw every {Hebrew} baby boy that is born into the Nile River! However, you can allow the baby girls to live."

Chapter 2

¹Now there was a man who was a descendant of Jacob's son Levi. He married a woman who was also a descendant of Levi. ²She became pregnant and had a baby boy. When she saw that he was a healthy baby, she {wanted to keep him alive, so she} hid him for three months. ³When she was unable to hide him any longer, she got a basket made from tall reeds. She covered the basket with tar {so it would float in water}. Then she put the baby in the basket and put the basket in the water. It was at the edge of the Nile River, in the middle of the tall reeds. ⁴His {older} sister hid nearby so she could find out what would happen to him.

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

⁷Then the baby's {older} sister {walked up} to the king's daughter and said, "Do you want me to go and find a Hebrew woman who will be able to nurse the baby for you?"

⁸The king's daughter said to her, "Yes, go and find one." So the girl went and found the baby's mother {and brought her to the king's daughter}. ⁹The king's daughter said to the mother, "Please take this baby and nurse him for me. I will pay you for doing that." So the baby's mother {agreed,} took him, and nursed him. ¹⁰When he had gotten bigger, his mother brought the boy to the king's daughter. She adopted him and said, "I pulled him out of the water, so I will call him Moses."

¹¹One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out {of the palace area} to see the hard work his people had to do. He also saw an Egyptian beating one of his people, the Hebrews. ¹²He looked around {to see if anyone was watching}. Seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian man and buried his body in the sand. ¹³The next day he was out again. He was surprised to see two Hebrew men fighting each other. He said to the man who started the fight, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

¹⁴The man replied, "No one put you in charge of judging us! Do not think you {will get away with} killing me like you killed that Egyptian yesterday!"

Then Moses was afraid, because he thought, "Everyone knows what I did." ¹⁵When the king heard that Moses killed an Egyptian, he ordered {his soldiers} to kill Moses. But Moses ran away from the king {and left Egypt. He traveled east} to the region of Midian and started to live there. {One day as} Moses was sitting beside a well, ¹⁶seven women came to the well. They were all the daughters of the man who was the priest for the Midianites. They got water and filled the troughs in order to give water to their father's sheep and goats. ¹⁷Some shepherds came and {started to} chase them away. But Moses got up and rescued them and helped their sheep and goats to drink.

¹⁸When his daughters returned {home}, their father {Jethro (who people also called} Reuel) asked them, "How did you get back {from taking care of the sheep} so quickly today?"

¹⁹They replied, "A man from Egypt kept the other shepherds from chasing us away. He also got water for us from the well and gave water to the sheep."

²⁰He said to his daughters, "By leaving him at the well, you did not show this man that we welcome strangers or even repay his kind act. Invite him in so that he can have something to eat!" {So they did, and Moses ate with them.}

²¹Jethro {invited Moses} to stay with his family and Moses accepted {his offer}. Jethro gave Moses his daughter Zipporah {to be his wife}. ²²When she gave birth to {their first} son, Moses said, "I am a foreigner living in a place foreign to me, so I will name him Gershom."

²³Many years went by. During that time, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites in Egypt were still groaning because of the hard work they had to do as slaves. They cried to God in heaven because of the work. ²⁴When he heard them groaning, he thought about his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵God saw {how the} Israelites {were being badly treated}, and he comprehended.

Chapter 3

¹Moses, on the other hand, was taking care of the sheep that belonged to Jethro (his father-in-law who was a priest to the Midianite people.) One day, he took the flock to the far side of the wildland. He came to a mountain where

God {would reveal himself to Moses and later to the Israelites} called Horeb. ²While he was there, Yahweh's messenger appeared to Moses as a fire inside a bush. Moses stared at the burning bush, amazed that the fire was not burning it completely to ashes. ³He thought, "I will go closer to see this strange thing! Why is the bush not burning up?"

⁴When Yahweh saw Moses coming for a closer look, he called out from the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

"Yes!" Moses replied.

⁵Yahweh said, "Take off your sandals {to honor me} before you come any closer, because you are standing on ground that is sacred {because it is near me.} ⁶I am God, the one that your father, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all worshiped." Moses was afraid {that God would kill him if he} looked at him, so he covered his face. ⁷Then Yahweh said, "I have watched closely how badly the Egyptians are treating my people in Egypt. I have heard my people shouting despairingly because of what the slave drivers are making them do. I am most certainly informed about how my people are suffering. ⁸I am coming down from heaven to rescue them from being slaves to the Egyptians. I will lead them from Egypt to a fertile land with plenty of room. It will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops. The peoples called the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites live there now. ⁹Truly, I have now heard the Israelites crying. I have also seen how badly the Egyptians treat them. ¹⁰So now I will send you to do this: Go to the king of Egypt and lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

¹¹But Moses said to God, "I am not important enough to go to the king in order to bring the Israelites out of Egypt."

¹²God said, "Even so, you can trust that I will be with you. When you bring my people out of Egypt, all of you will worship me right here on this mountain. That will prove to you that I am the one who sent you to them."

¹³Moses said to God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God whom your ancestors worshiped has sent me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what should I say to them?"

¹⁴God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Tell the Israelites that the God whose name means 'I AM' sent you to them." ¹⁵God also said to Moses, "You must say this to the Israelites, 'Yahweh has sent me to you. He is the God Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and your other ancestors worshiped. Yahweh is my eternal name, and this is the name by which people living at any time must remember me.'

¹⁶Go call a meeting with all the Israelite leaders. Tell them, 'Yahweh appeared to me. He is the God Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and your other ancestors worshiped. He said: "I have come down to carefully watch {and do something about} what the Egyptians are doing to you. ¹⁷I promise that I will rescue you from the Egyptians who treat you badly. I will take you to the land where the peoples called the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites live now. The land is excellent for raising livestock and growing crops.'" ¹⁸The leaders will do what you say.

Then you and the leaders will go to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him, 'Yahweh, the God whom we Hebrews worship, has made a special visit to us. Please allow us to travel for a few days to a place in the wilderness in order that there we may offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship.' ¹⁹But I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go; not even by force. ²⁰So I will act very powerfully, and I will hurt the Egyptians with very bad things that only I can do. Then he will chase you away.

²¹When this happens, I will cause the Egyptians to be willing to help you Hebrews so that, when you leave Egypt, you will not go out like poor slaves. ²²At that time, each Hebrew woman will ask the women living or visiting nearby for things made from silver and gold and for clothing. You will be able to have your children wear the things they give you. That is how you will take everything from the Egyptians."

Chapter 4

¹Moses replied to God, "They will completely disbelieve me and ignore me because they will think, 'Yahweh did not appear to you.'"

²Yahweh said to him, "What is that in your hand?"

Moses answered, "A staff."

³Yahweh said, "Throw it down on the ground!" So Moses threw the staff on the ground. It became a snake and Moses ran away from it. ⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Pick up the snake by its tail." So Moses picked up the snake by the tail, and it became a staff in his hand again. ⁵{Yahweh said, "Do the same thing in front of the} Israelite elders in order that they may believe that I, Yahweh, the God that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and your other ancestors worshiped, truly appeared to you."

⁶Yahweh gave Moses another instruction: "Put your hand on your chest inside your robe." Moses put his hand into his robe. When he brought his hand out, it had a disease that made the skin look as white as snow. ⁷Then Yahweh said, "Put your hand in your robe again." Moses put his hand back inside his robe. This time when he brought it out, amazingly, the skin on his hand looked like the rest of his skin again.

⁸{Yahweh said, "You can do that in front of the Israelite people, too.} And if they do not believe you or listen to you after seeing the first miracle, they will believe you when you perform the second miracle. ⁹But if they do not believe you or listen to what you say even after you show them these two miracles, get some water from the Nile River, and pour it on the dry ground. When you do that, the water that you pour on the dry ground will become blood."

¹⁰Then Moses said to Yahweh, "But Lord, I am not good at speaking to people. I have never been and you talking to me has not made me better. I speak slowly and never know what to say."

¹¹Then Yahweh said to him, "Do not forget that I, Yahweh, make people's mouths! I make people unable to speak, or unable to hear, or able to see or not to see! ¹²So go now, and I will help you speak, and I will tell you what to say."

¹³But Moses replied, "Oh Lord, I ask you, please choose anyone else to send!"

¹⁴Then Yahweh became angry with Moses and said to him, "What about your brother Aaron, the descendant of Levi? I know he is a good speaker. He is on his way here right now. When he sees you, he will be very happy. ¹⁵You will tell him what to say. I will help you both to speak and will tell you both what to do. ¹⁶He will speak for you to the Israelite people. He will be your spokesman, and he will think of you as if you were me. ¹⁷Be sure to take your staff with you, because you will perform miracles with it."

¹⁸Moses went back to his father-in-law, Jethro, and said to him, "Please let me go back to my relatives in Egypt to see if they are well."

Jethro said to Moses, "You may go. Be safe."

¹⁹{While he was still} in Midian, Yahweh told Moses {again}, "Go back to Egypt now, for everyone trying to kill you is now dead." ²⁰So Moses put his wife and sons on a donkey and started going toward Egypt. He took the staff with him {as} God {had told him to do}. ²¹Yahweh spoke to Moses again, "When you get to Egypt, be sure to do all the miracles that I have given you power to do in front of the king. But I will make him reject you so that he will not let the Israelites leave Egypt. ²²Then say to him, 'This is what Yahweh says: "Israel is like my firstborn son, ²³and when I told you, 'Let my son go, so that he may worship me,' you refused. Therefore, I will kill your firstborn son!'"

²⁴One night, as they were camping on the way to Egypt, Yahweh confronted {Moses} in order to kill him. ²⁵Then {Moses' wife,} Zipporah, took a sharp stone knife and cut off the foreskin of their firstborn son. Then she touched

the foreskin to {Moses}' feet and said, "You are really my husband by blood."²⁶ She said, "a husband by blood," because she had cut off their son's foreskin. So Yahweh did not harm anyone.

²⁷Meanwhile, Yahweh said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So Aaron went and met Moses at the mountain where God met Moses and greeted him by kissing him.²⁸ Moses told Aaron everything that Yahweh had sent him {to Egypt to say to the king and the Israelites} and all the miracles that Yahweh had instructed him {to do}.

²⁹When Moses and Aaron arrived in Egypt, they called a meeting with all the Israelite leaders.³⁰ Aaron told them everything that Yahweh had told Moses and performed the miracles as the leaders watched.³¹ The leaders believed Aaron and Moses. Because they heard that Yahweh had seen how miserable the Israelites were and had come down to help them, the leaders bowed down to worship him.

Chapter 5

¹Then Moses and Aaron went to the king. They said to him, "The God {named} Yahweh, whom we Israelites worship, says this to you: 'Let my people go to the desert so that they may have a feast to honor me!'"

²But the king said, "Who is Yahweh? I have never heard of him, so why should I obey what he demands? I will certainly not let the Israelites go!"

³Moses and Aaron replied, "The God we Hebrews worship has made a special visit to us. Please allow us to travel for a few days to a place in the wilderness in order that there we may offer sacrifices to Yahweh, our God. If we do not do that, he will cause us to die from diseases or from attacks by our enemies."

⁴But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, it is pointless for you to distract the Israelites from their work. Get back to work, all of you!"

⁵Then the king said, "Look, there are too many Israelites in Egypt for you to encourage them to just stop working."

⁶That same day the king commanded the Egyptian slave drivers and the Israelite bosses who directed the slaves,

⁷"Stop giving the Israelites straw for making bricks. From now on, they will have to go get it themselves."⁸ However, still force them to make the same number of bricks that they did before. Do not lower the number at all. They do not want to work. That is why they are asking me to let them go {into the wilderness} to worship their god.⁹ Make the men work harder so that they will be too busy to listen to lies {from their leaders}!"

¹⁰So the slave drivers and Israelite bosses went to where the Israelites were and said to them, "The king has said that he will no longer give you any straw."¹¹ So you must go yourselves and get straw where you can find it. But you must keep working to make the same number of bricks."¹² So the Israelites scattered all over Egypt to collect leftover grain stalks to use for straw.¹³ As for the slave bosses, they kept harassing them by saying, "Do all the work we assign to you each day. Make the same number of bricks as you did before, when we gave you straw!"¹⁴ {When they were not able to make enough bricks,} the king's slave drivers beat the bosses they had put in charge of the Israelites. They told them, "This is because your work teams have not been able to make the same number of bricks in the last couple of days as they did before."

¹⁵Then the Israelite bosses went in {to the palace} and complained to the king, "Why are you treating us this way?"

¹⁶Your slave drivers are not giving us any straw for making bricks, but they keep telling us, 'Make the same number of bricks!' They are even beating us. But {our reduced brick making is their} fault and your fault."

¹⁷But the king said, "You are lazy and do not want to work! That is why you keep saying, 'Allow us to go {to the desert} to worship Yahweh.'¹⁸ Get back to work right now! We are not going to give you any straw, but you must keep making the same number of bricks!"

¹⁹When {the king} said, "You must not make fewer bricks each day," the Israelite bosses understood how bad their life was. ²⁰As they left their meeting with the king, they met Aaron and Moses, who were waiting for them. ²¹They said to Aaron and Moses, "We hope Yahweh notices that you have made the king and his officials hate us. We hope he punishes you two! You have made them think they should kill us!"

²²Moses left them and prayed to Yahweh again, "My Lord, why have you caused all these evil things to happen to your people? You sent me to help them, not hurt them. ²³Ever since I went to the king and told him what you told me to say, he has treated your people very badly, and you have not done anything to help them!"

Chapter 6

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

²God spoke to Moses again, "I am Yahweh. ³I showed myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but they did not fully comprehend {the meaning of} my name Yahweh. ⁴I also agreed to bless them. I promised to give them, as their own, the land where the descendants of Canaan live. That was the land in which they lived as foreigners.

⁵Furthermore, I have heard the Israelites complaining because the Egyptians have made them slaves. I always remember what I promised. ⁶Therefore tell the Israelite people that I said this: 'I am Yahweh. I will take the Egyptian's heavy loads off your back. I will deliver you from being their slaves. I will very powerfully save you by punishing them very harshly. ⁷I will claim you as my own people, and I will be the God {you worship}. You will truly know that I am Yahweh, your God who frees you from the heavy loads that the Egyptians make you carry. ⁸I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you, and it will be yours. I, Yahweh, am {promising this}.'"

⁹Moses told that to the Israelites, but they did not believe what he said, because they were discouraged and overworked.

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

¹²But Moses said to Yahweh, "Certainly, if the Israelites have not paid attention to what I told them, the king will not pay attention to what I tell him, since I am a poor speaker." ¹³But Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron and commanded them to go to the Israelites and to the king of Egypt in order to free the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt.

¹⁴These are the original clan leaders:

Jacob's oldest son Reuben had these sons: Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Karmi. The clans of Reuben are descended from them.

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

¹⁶These are the names of the descendants of Levi in each generation: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Levi was 137 years old when he died. ¹⁷The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimei. They were ancestors of clans that have those names. ¹⁸The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Kohath was 133 years old when he died. ¹⁹The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These were ancestors of clans that descended from Levi by each generation.

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

²¹The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. ²²The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

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

²⁴The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. They were the ancestors of the Korahite people. ²⁵Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she gave birth to Phinehas. These were the clan leaders descended from Levi in each generation.

²⁶Aaron and Moses were the ones to whom Yahweh said, "Lead all the Israelites out of Egypt organized as army units." ²⁷They were the ones who spoke to the king of Egypt in order to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

²⁸On the day that Yahweh spoke to Moses in Egypt, ²⁹he said, "I am Yahweh. Tell the king everything that I say to you."

³⁰But Moses said to Yahweh, "Please listen to me. I am not a good speaker. So why should the king listen to what I tell him?"

Chapter 7

¹Yahweh answered, "See, I am putting you in front of the king {like} a god, and your brother Aaron will {speak for you like} a prophet. ²You must tell everything I instruct you to your {older} brother Aaron, and he will tell it all to the king. He must tell the king to let the Israelites leave his land. ³But I will make the king stubborn. Because of this, even though I will do many kinds of miracles here in Egypt, ⁴the king will not obey you. Then I will punish the Egyptians very severely and will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt as an army. ⁵Once I have proven how powerful I am to the Egyptians by rescuing the Israelites from being their slaves, they will know that I am Yahweh."

⁶Moses and Aaron did everything that Yahweh told them to do. ⁷When {God sent} them to talk to the king of Egypt, Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 years old.

⁸Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹"If the king says to you, 'Show me that God sent you by performing a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Throw your staff down in front of the king in order that it may become a snake.'"

¹⁰So Aaron and Moses went to the king and did what Yahweh told them to do. Aaron threw his staff down in front of the king and his officials, and it became a snake. ¹¹Then the king called his wise men and men who did magic. They did the same thing, using their magic. ¹²They all threw down their staffs, and the staffs became snakes. Then Aaron's snake ate their snakes! ¹³But, just as Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey what Aaron and Moses said.

¹⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The king is very stubborn. He refuses to allow my people to go. ¹⁵So go meet him as he is going down to the Nile River in the morning. Wait for him on the riverbank. Take with you the staff that became a snake. ¹⁶Say to him, 'The God {named} Yahweh, the one we Hebrews worship, sent me to you to tell you to let his people go in order that they may worship him in the desert. But you still have not obeyed. ¹⁷So Yahweh says this: "This is the way you will know that I am Yahweh. Look out! I am going to hit the water that is in the Nile River with the staff that is in my hand. {When I do that,} the water will become blood. ¹⁸Then the fish in the Nile River will die, and the water in the river will smell bad. The Egyptians will wear themselves out trying to find water to drink from the river.'"

¹⁹Yahweh continued, "Then tell Aaron, 'Hold your staff out {as though you were holding it} over all the water in Egypt—over the rivers, the canals, the ponds, and over all the stored water, in order that all of it may become blood.' {When Aaron does that,} there will be blood throughout Egypt, even in wooden and stone jars."

²⁰So Aaron and Moses did what Yahweh told them to do. As the king and his officials were watching, Aaron lifted up his staff and then struck the water in the Nile River with it. All the water in the river turned to blood. ²¹Then all the fish in the river died. The water smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink the water from the river. All

the water in Egypt was blood. ²²But the Egyptian men who did magic did the same thing using their magic. So, just as Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey what Aaron and Moses said. ²³Then the king turned and went back to his palace, and he did not think any more about it. ²⁴All the Egyptians dug into the ground near the Nile River to get water to drink, because they could not drink the water from the river.

²⁵One week passed after Yahweh struck the Nile River.

Chapter 8

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

⁵Yahweh also said to Moses, "Say this to Aaron: 'Hold your staff in your hand and stretch it out {as though you were stretching it} over the river, the canals, and the ponds, and cause frogs to come up {from all this water} and to cover the land of Egypt.'" ⁶{After Moses told that to him,} Aaron stretched out his hand {as though he were stretching it} over all the water in Egypt. Then the frogs came up {from the water} and covered Egypt. ⁷But the men who did magic did the same thing by magic, and they caused more frogs to come up from the water onto the land.

⁸Then the king called Moses and Aaron and said, "Ask Yahweh to take these frogs away from me and my people. After that happens, I will allow your people to go to worship Yahweh."

⁹Moses said to the king, "Show how you are more glorious than me by telling me when to pray for you and your officials and the rest of your peoples. I will pray that the frogs stop coming to your houses and stay in the Nile River."

¹⁰The king replied, "{Pray for us} tomorrow."

So Moses said, "I will do what you say. You will know that the God {named} Yahweh, {the one we worship, is the only true God, and that} there is no other God like him when ¹¹the frogs leave you, your officials, all the rest of your people and all your houses; when the only ones left are in the Nile River."

¹²Then Moses and Aaron left the king. Moses pleaded with Yahweh about the frogs he had used to punish the king.

¹³Yahweh did just what Moses asked him to do. As a result, all the frogs in the houses, in their courtyards, and in their fields died. ¹⁴The people gathered together all the dead frogs into big piles, and the land smelled very bad.

¹⁵But when the king noticed that the frogs were gone, he made himself stubborn again. Just as Yahweh had said would happen, the king did not do what Aaron and Moses told him.

¹⁶Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Tell Aaron to strike the dusty ground with his staff so that all the dust all over Egypt will become gnats." ¹⁷Moses and Aaron obeyed Yahweh. Aaron hit the dusty ground with his staff, and all over Egypt the dust became gnats. The gnats covered the people and the animals. ¹⁸The men who worked magic tried to cause gnats to appear, but they could not do it. Gnats were on the people and animals.

¹⁹The magicians said to the king, "A god did this!" But just like Yahweh had said, the king continued to be stubborn and would not obey Aaron and Moses.

²⁰Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Get up early tomorrow morning. Wait to meet the king as he comes to the river and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh says to you: "Let my people go in order that they may worship me. ²¹If you do not let my people go immediately, watch out! Be sure that I will shortly send swarms of flies which will cover you, your slaves, the rest of your people, and your houses. All the Egyptian's houses will be full of flies. They will even cover

the ground. ²²But when that happens, I will treat the region of Goshen differently, because my people live there. There will be no swarms of flies there. In that way, you will know that I, Yahweh, am here in this land. ²³I will treat my people and your people differently. I will prove how powerful I am tomorrow!"" ²⁴{In the morning, Moses warned the king, but he did not listen.} So Yahweh did what he said he would do. He sent great swarms of flies into the king's palace and into his officials' houses. They were everywhere in Egypt. The flies ruined the country.

²⁵Then the king summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Just go worship your god here in Egypt!"

²⁶But Moses replied, "It would not be right for us to do that, because we will offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship, that are very offensive to the Egyptians. Look, it is certain that if we offer sacrifices right in front of them that the Egyptians hate passionately, they will kill us by throwing stones at us! ²⁷We need to travel for three days into the wilderness. There we will offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship, just as he commands us."

²⁸So the king said, "I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the god you worship, in the desert. But you must not go very far. Now pray for me!"

²⁹Moses said {to the king}, "Listen to me! After I leave you, I will pray to Yahweh, asking that he would cause the swarms of flies to leave you, your slaves, and the rest of your people tomorrow. But do not lie to us again by refusing to let our people go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh!" ³⁰Then Moses left the king and prayed to Yahweh.

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

Chapter 9

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go to the king and say to him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God we Hebrews worship, says: "Let my people go in order that they may worship me. ²Otherwise, if you refuse to free them but continue to keep them {as your slaves}, ³I warn you that I will soon powerfully punish you by sending a terrible disease on all your domesticated animals to make them sick and die—on your horses, on your donkeys, on your camels, on your cattle, and on your flocks of sheep and goats. ⁴But I, Yahweh, will treat the Israelites' domesticated animals differently than the Egyptians'. None of the Israelites' domesticated animals will die.'""

⁵Yahweh specified when he would do this. He said, "Tomorrow I will do to Egypt what I threatened."

⁶The next day Yahweh sent a disease as he had said he would and all of the Egyptians' domesticated animals died, but none of the Israelites' domesticated animals died. ⁷The king sent {men to look at what happened}, and they were surprised to see that none of the Israelites' animals had died. {But after they told that to the king,} he continued to be stubborn, and he did not let the Israelites go.

⁸Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, "Take a few handfuls of ashes from an oven. Moses should throw them up into the air in front of the king. ⁹The ashes will spread all over the country of Egypt, because they are fine dust. Everywhere in the land, the ashes will cause sores on the skin which turn red and burst open on both people and animals." ¹⁰So they took some ashes from an oven and stood in front of the king. Moses threw the ashes up into the air. As the ashes landed on both the Egyptian people and their animals, they caused sores on the skin that turned red and burst open. ¹¹Because skin sores covered the men who worked magic (along with all the rest of the Egyptians), they could not challenge Moses. ¹²But Yahweh caused the king to continue to be stubborn. He did not obey Moses and Aaron, just as Yahweh had told Moses would happen.

¹³Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Get up early tomorrow morning. Go and stand in front of the king and tell him that Yahweh God, the one whom the Hebrew people worship, says this: 'Let my people go in order that they may worship me {in the wilderness}. ¹⁴If you do not, then this time I am planning terrible disasters that will not only make your officials and the rest of your people very sad but also you yourself, in order that you might know that there is no god like me anywhere in the world. ¹⁵By this time I could have powerfully struck you and your people

with terrible diseases that would have destroyed your nation. ¹⁶But I have let you live. The reason I have let you live is to show you how strong I am and so that I will be famous all over the world. ¹⁷You are still acting proudly and refusing to let my people go. ¹⁸So listen to this: About this time tomorrow I will cause large balls of ice to fall in Egypt. Between the time Egypt first became a nation and today, there has never been an ice storm as bad as this one will be. ¹⁹So you should send {a message to all people} to put under shelter {their} domesticated animals and everything else that {they} own that is out in the fields. The ice will fall on every person and every animal that is out in the fields and that is not brought under a shelter. They will all die.”

²⁰{Moses did what Yahweh said.} Some of the king’s officials believed and were afraid of what Yahweh had said. So they quickly brought all their slaves and their animals under shelters. ²¹But those who did not believe what Yahweh had said left their slaves and their animals in the fields.

²²Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Raise your hand up toward the sky in order that balls of ice {may fall} all over the land of Egypt—on the people, on the animals, and on all the crops in the fields.”

²³So Moses lifted his staff up toward the sky, and Yahweh brought a storm with thunder, balls of ice, and lightning. Yahweh caused the balls of ice to fall all over the land of Egypt. ²⁴While balls of ice were falling, lightning was flashing. There had never been such a huge ice storm like that in Egypt since it first became a country. ²⁵The ice struck everywhere in Egypt, hitting everything that was outside, animals as well as people. The ice destroyed the crops in the fields and broke limbs off the fruit trees. ²⁶Only in the region of Goshen, where the Israelites were living, was there no ice.

²⁷Then the king sent {someone} to summon Moses and Aaron. He said to them, “This time {I admit that} I have sinned. {What} Yahweh {has done} is right, and {what} I and my people {have done} is wrong. ²⁸Pray to Yahweh because his thunder and ice are terrible! I will let you and your people go; you do not have to stay in Egypt any longer.”

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

³¹{When the ice fell} it ruined the flax because the blossoms were forming. It also ruined the barley because its grain was ripe. ³²But it did not ruin any of the wheat varieties, because they grow later in the year.)

³³So Moses left the king and went outside the city. He raised his hands toward Yahweh and prayed. Then the thunder and the ice storm stopped. The rain also stopped falling on the land of Egypt. ³⁴But when the king saw that the rain, the ice storm, and the thunder had stopped, he sinned again. He and his officials made themselves stubborn. ³⁵So, just as Yahweh had predicted to Moses, the king was stubborn and did not allow the Israelites to leave.

Chapter 10

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

³So Moses and Aaron went to the king and said to him, “Yahweh God, {the one whom we} Hebrews {worship}, says this, ‘How long will you {stubbornly} refuse to bow to me? Let my people go in order that they may worship me {in the wilderness}!’ ⁴If you do not let them go, I warn you that tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country. ⁵They will completely cover the ground so that you will not even be able to see it. They will eat everything that the ice storm did not destroy. They will eat everything that is growing on your fruit trees. ⁶They will fill your houses and the

houses of all your officials and of all the rest of the Egyptians. There will be more locusts than your parents or your grandparents have ever seen from the time your ancestors first came to this land until now!" Then Moses {and Aaron} turned and left the king.

⁷The king's officials said to him, "This is another trap for us! Let the Israelites go in order that they may worship Yahweh, their god. You must know that our country is already ruined."

⁸{The king ordered someone} to bring Moses and Aaron back to him. He said to them, "Go worship Yahweh, your god. But who will go?"

⁹Moses replied, "We all need to go, everyone, including those who are young and those who are old. We need to take our sons, our daughters, and our flocks of sheep and goats and herds of livestock because a celebration to honor Yahweh is for all of us."

¹⁰The king replied, "I am not about to let you go with your women and children because I do not think Yahweh is about to help you. Watch out so that something bad does not happen to you! ¹¹Since you keep asking, go worship Yahweh with just your men. But no one else may go!" Then the king drove Moses and Aaron away.

¹²Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over Egypt and locusts will come up and cover the country. They will eat every green thing in the whole country, anything that the hail left behind."

¹³So Moses held out his staff as though he were stretching it over the country of Egypt. Then Yahweh caused a wind to blow from the east, and it blew over the land all that day and all that night. By the next morning, it had brought the locusts. ¹⁴The locusts came up all over Egypt. They landed everywhere in the whole country. There had never been anything like this huge number of locusts, and there will never be anything like it again. ¹⁵They covered the surface of the ground and made it appear black. They ate all the plants in the land and everything on the trees that the ice storm had not destroyed. They left nothing that was green on any tree or on any plant anywhere in Egypt.

¹⁶The king quickly called Aaron and Moses and said, "I have sinned against Yahweh, your god, and against you.

¹⁷Can you forgive me right now for having sinned this one time? Please pray to Yahweh, your god. Just ask him to take away the locusts that will cause us all to die."

¹⁸So Moses and Aaron left the king, and Moses prayed to Yahweh. ¹⁹Then Yahweh changed the wind so that it blew strongly from the west, and it picked up and forced all the locusts into the Red Sea. There were no locusts left anywhere in the country of Egypt. ²⁰But Yahweh made the king stubborn again, and the king did not let the Israelites go.

²¹Yahweh said to Moses, "Reach your hand up toward the sky so that it may be dark over all the land of Egypt, so dark that it will seem like people can feel it." ²²So Moses reached his hand toward the sky, and it became extremely dark all over Egypt for three days and nights. ²³No one could see anyone else. No one went anywhere for three days. But there was light in the area where the Israelites lived.

²⁴The king called Moses and said, "{All right,} you may go and worship Yahweh. Your women and your children may go with you. But your flocks {of sheep and goats} and your herds {of cattle} must remain here."

²⁵But Moses replied, "No, you must also let us take our sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer to Yahweh, our God.

²⁶Our domesticated animals must also go with us. We are not going to leave one animal behind because we must take them to worship Yahweh, the God we worship. We will not know what we will need for worshipping Yahweh until we get to where we are going."

²⁷But Yahweh made the king continue to be stubborn. The king would not allow the Israelites to go. ²⁸The king said to Moses and Aaron, "Get out of here! Make sure that you never {come to} see me again! The day you see me again, I will have someone kill you!"

²⁹Moses replied, "You are correct! I will never see you again!"

Chapter 11

¹Yahweh said to Moses, "I will bring one more disaster on the king of Egypt and on all his people. After that, he will let you leave. When he does, he will absolutely chase you out of Egypt. ²Speak quickly to all the Israelites. Tell them to ask all their Egyptian neighbors, both men and women, to give them things made from silver and gold."

³Yahweh made the Egyptians willing to help the Israelites. Also, the king's officials and all the rest of the people thought that Moses was one of the most important men in Egypt.

⁴Then Moses said {to the king}, "This is what Yahweh says: 'About midnight I will go through Egypt, ⁵and I will kill every oldest son in Egypt. I will kill without exception: the rich king's oldest son, the poor mill slave's oldest son, and even every oldest male born among the animals. ⁶When that happens, people all over Egypt will lament more terribly than anyone ever has lamented before and more than anyone ever will again. ⁷But dogs will not even bark at the Israelites or at their animals. Then you will know for sure that I, Yahweh, am treating the Egyptians differently from the Israelites.' ⁸Then all these officials of yours will come and bow down before me and will say, 'Please get out of Egypt, you and everyone who is with you!' After that, we will leave Egypt!" When Moses had said that, he left the king very angrily.

⁹Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The king will not obey you. This is so I can cause many disastrous miracles in his country."

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

Chapter 12

¹Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses in Egypt, ²"Start counting your months at this new moon. It will be the Israelites' first month of the year. ³Tell the whole Israelite community, 'On the tenth day of this month every man who leads a family must take a young sheep or a young goat for his household. ⁴If there are not enough people in his family to eat a whole cooked lamb, then his family and a family that lives nearby may kill one animal. Plan to share the lamb according to the number of people in each family and according to how much each person can eat. ⁵You may choose a sheep or a goat; but it must be a one-year-old male, and it must be perfect, without any defects. ⁶You must take special care of these animals until the fourteenth day of this month. On that day, all the Israelites must kill the young sheep or young goats in the evening. ⁷Then they must take some of the blood from the young sheep or young goats, and they must smear it on the two doorposts and on the tops of the doorframes of the houses in which they will eat the meat. ⁸They must roast the animals over a fire and eat the meat that same night. They must eat it with bitter herbs and with bread that does not have yeast in it. ⁹You must not eat any of the meat uncooked, and you must not cook the meat in water. You must do this: cook the whole animal over a fire. Do not remove the head, legs, or inside parts. ¹⁰Do not save any of the meat until the next morning. Any meat that you have not eaten by morning, you must burn to ash. ¹¹When you eat it, you must be dressed ready to travel. You must have your sandals on your feet and your walking staff in your hands. You must eat it hurriedly. It will be a festival called Passover to honor me, Yahweh.

¹²On that night I will go throughout Egypt, and I will kill all the oldest males in Egypt, both humans and animals. I am punishing all the Egyptians' gods. I am Yahweh. ¹³The blood on your houses will show that you are obeying me. When I see the blood, I will go past those houses. I will not harm the people who are in those houses when I come to punish the Egyptians.

¹⁴You will make this day a feast to remember and celebrate what I, Yahweh, will have done for you. This is a rule for you: every generation of Israelites must celebrate this annual feast for all of time. ¹⁵For seven days you must eat

bread that has no yeast in it. On the first day of that week, you must remove all the yeast that is in your houses. During those seven days, if anyone eats bread that has yeast in it, you must drive that person out from your people. ¹⁶On the first day of that week, you must have a holy meeting. You must do the same thing on the seventh day. People must not work at all on those two days. The only work you may do is to prepare food to eat.

¹⁷You must celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread on this day because this day is exactly when I am rescuing all your tribes from slavery in Egypt. This is a law for you: every generation of Israelites for all of time must celebrate to remember that I rescued you on this day. ¹⁸On the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, you must stop eating bread that has yeast in it. You may not eat bread with yeast in it again until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. ¹⁹For those seven days you must not have any yeast in your house. During that time, if anyone—either a foreigner or an Israelite—eats bread that has yeast in it, you must drive that person out from your people. ²⁰Do not eat any yeast. Wherever you are living, you must eat bread that does not have yeast in it.”

²¹Then Moses summoned all the Israelite leaders. He said to them, “Each family should select a young sheep or young goat and kill it to eat it to celebrate the festival that you will call ‘Passover.’ ²²{Let the lamb’s blood drain} into a bowl. Get a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood. Then wipe some of the blood on the top of the doorframe and on the doorposts of your houses. The people in each house must stay inside the house until the next morning. ²³When Yahweh goes through Egypt to kill every oldest male, he will see the blood on your doorframes. Because of that, he will pass over those houses and will not allow the killing-destroyer to enter your houses to kill your oldest sons.

²⁴You and your descendants must celebrate this ritual forever; this is a law. ²⁵When you arrive in the land that Yahweh will give to you as he promised, you must keep celebrating this ritual every year. ²⁶When your children ask you, ‘What does this ritual mean?’ ²⁷you must tell them, ‘This ritual is to remember how your ancestors sacrificed lambs on the night that Yahweh’s angel passed over the houses of the Israelites when they were in Egypt. He killed the oldest males in all the Egyptian houses, but he did not kill the sons in our houses.’” After Moses told them this, the elders all bowed their heads and worshiped Yahweh. ²⁸Then the Israelites did exactly what Yahweh told Moses and Aaron to tell them to do.

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

³¹That night the king summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Get up, you and all the other Israelites, and get away from my people and country now! Go and worship Yahweh, as you requested! ³²You may even take your flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle just as you requested. Just leave! Ask Yahweh to bless me also!”

³³The Egyptians helped the Israelites to leave their country quickly. They said, “Otherwise, we will all die!” ³⁴So the Israelites prepared to leave at once. They took the bowls in which they mixed the dough to make bread and the dough that was in the bowls without any yeast in it, and they wrapped the bowls in their cloaks. They put the bowls on their shoulders. ³⁵Then the Israelites did as Moses told them. They went to their Egyptian neighbors and asked them for silver, gold, and clothing. ³⁶Yahweh caused the Egyptians to greatly respect the Israelites, so they gave them what they asked for. In that way, the Israelites carried away the wealth of the Egyptians.

³⁷The Israelites walked from the city of Rameses to the town of Succoth. There were about 600, 000 men who went, in addition to the women and children. ³⁸Many other people who were not Israelites went along with them. There was also a large amount of livestock, including flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle. ³⁹Pharaoh forced the Israelites to leave Egypt so quickly that they did not have time to prepare food to take with them or to allow the bread dough to form yeast. When they made bread with the dough they brought from Egypt, they made flatbread because it did not have yeast.

⁴⁰The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years. ⁴¹On the day that those 430 years ended, on that very day, all the tribes of Yahweh's people left Egypt. ⁴²It was a night when the Israelites stayed awake as Yahweh brought them out of Egypt. So this same night every year is a night that they dedicate to Yahweh, a night when the Israelites and their descendants in every generation remember how Yahweh kept their ancestors safe.

⁴³Then Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the law about the Passover ritual: Do not let foreigners eat the Passover meal. ⁴⁴But if anyone buys a slave and circumcises him, that slave may eat the Passover meal. ⁴⁵Do not let people who are living temporarily among you who are not Israelites or servants to whom you pay money eat the Passover meal. ⁴⁶You must eat the Passover meal inside one house. Do not take any of the meat outside the house. Do not break the lamb's bones. ⁴⁷The whole Israelite community must celebrate this festival.

⁴⁸When someone from another country comes to live with you and wants to celebrate Yahweh's Passover festival, circumcise all the males in his household. Then he can eat the Passover meal, and you should treat that man as though he had been born an Israelite. But do not allow men who are not circumcised to eat the Passover meal.

⁴⁹These rules apply to people who were born as Israelites and to foreigners who come and live among you."

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

Chapter 13

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

³Moses said to the people, "Always remember today! This is the day that you left Egypt. This is the day I freed you from being the Egyptians' slaves. Yahweh has powerfully brought you out of Egypt. Do not eat any bread that has yeast in it {whenever you celebrate this day}. ⁴You are leaving Egypt on this day, which is the first day of the month of Aviv. ⁵Later, when Yahweh brings you into the land where the descendants of Canaan, Heth, Amor, Hiv, and Jebus now live, the land that he promised your ancestors that he would give to you, a land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops, you must celebrate this festival in this month every year. ⁶For seven days the bread you eat must not have any yeast in it. On the seventh day, you must have a celebration to honor Yahweh. ⁷Do not eat bread that has yeast in it for seven days. You should not have any yeast or bread made with yeast anywhere in your land.

⁸On the day that you celebrate the festival, you must tell your children, 'We are doing this to remember what Yahweh did for us when we left Egypt.' ⁹The celebration will be like something you tie on your forehead or on your wrist. It will remind you to recite to others what Yahweh has instructed you, because you are grateful to him for powerfully bringing you out of Egypt. ¹⁰So you must celebrate this festival every year, forever, at the time Yahweh has appointed.

¹¹Yahweh will bring you into the land where the descendants of Canaan live, as he promised to you and your ancestors that he would do. When he gives that land to you, ¹²you must give all the firstborn males of both people and animals to Yahweh. These all will belong to Yahweh. ¹³In the case of a firstborn donkey, you must buy it back by killing a lamb instead of it. If you do not buy it back, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. You must buy back every one of your firstborn sons.

¹⁴In the future, when one of your children asks, 'What does this mean?' you must say to him, 'Yahweh powerfully brought us out of Egypt and freed us from being slaves there. ¹⁵What happened was: The king of Egypt did not let us leave his land, so Yahweh killed all the firstborn males in Egypt, both the boys and the firstborn of their livestock. That is why we now sacrifice to Yahweh all the firstborn of our livestock, but we buy back our own firstborn sons.' ¹⁶This celebration will be like something you tie on your wrist or on your forehead to remind you that Yahweh powerfully brought you out of Egypt."

¹⁷When the king of Egypt let the Israelites go, God did not guide them along the road toward the Philistines' land. Even though it was shorter, God thought, "If enemies attack them, they may change their minds and go back to Egypt." ¹⁸Instead, God led them to go around through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. The Israelites left Egypt in an orderly formation.

¹⁹Moses had them take the bones of Joseph along with them, because Joseph long ago had made the Israelites promise that they would do that. He had said to them, "God will always care for you. {When he brings you to the promised land,} you must carry my bones with you."

²⁰The Israelites went from Succoth to Etham (which was at the edge of the wilderness). They set up their tents there. ²¹When they walked during the daytime, Yahweh went in front of them in a tall cloud to show them the way. During the night, he went in front of them in a tall flame so they had light and could travel in the daytime and also at nighttime. ²²Yahweh never left them. He was there in the tall cloud during the day and in the tall flame during the night.

Chapter 14

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Tell the Israelites to turn toward Pi Hahiroth and camp near it. That place is between Migdol and the {Red} Sea, near Baal Zephon. Set up your tents there, close to the sea. ³When the king knows you have done that, he will think, 'The Israelites are lost. They are wandering around, and the desert blocks their path.' ⁴I will make the king stubborn again and he will chase you {with his army}. Then people will revere me more than the king and his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh." {So Moses told the Israelites that,} and they did what he told them to do.

⁵When someone told the king of Egypt that the Israelites had escaped, he and his officials changed how they were thinking about them and said, "What have we done? The Israelites will no longer be our slaves because we let them go!" ⁶So the king had {someone} fasten his horses to his chariot and he rode out with his army. ⁷{When he left} he took all Egypt's chariots, including the best 600 chariots. In each chariot {he placed a driver, a soldier, and} a commander. ⁸Yahweh made the king of Egypt stubborn, so he {and his army} chased the Israelites. The Israelites marched out confidently. ⁹The Egyptian army, with all the king's horses and chariots and horsemen, chased after the Israelites. They caught up with them as they were camped near the sea, close to Pi Hahiroth, in front of Baal Zephon.

¹⁰When the king's army got near, the Israelite people were surprised to see that the Egyptians were marching toward them. They were terrified, so they cried out to Yahweh to help them. ¹¹Then they said to Moses, "You have not helped us by bringing us out of Egypt. {Pharaoh's army is going to} kill us here in the wilderness. {If we had stayed in Egypt,} someone would have buried us in graves. ¹²That is what we told you when we were in Egypt. We said, 'Leave us alone, and let us work for the Egyptians.' It would have been better for us to be slaves for the Egyptians than to die here in the desert!"

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

¹⁵Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Instead of asking me to help you, tell the people to pack their tents and prepare to march. ¹⁶You must lift up your staff and stretch out the hand holding it over the sea to cause it to divide. Then the Israelites will go in the middle of the sea, walking on dry ground. ¹⁷Watch me! I will make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will chase the Israelites. Then, because of what I will do to the king, his army, his chariots, and his horsemen, people will revere me. ¹⁸When I have won a glorious victory over the king, his chariots, and his horsemen, the {other} Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, {the God who can do anything}."

¹⁹Then the angel of God, who had been in front of the Israelites, moved and went behind them. The tall, bright cloud that had been in front of them also moved to be behind them. ²⁰The cloud was between the Egyptian army and the Israelites. The cloud caused the Egyptian army to be in the darkness, but it gave light to the Israelites. As a result, neither group could come near the other group during the whole night. ²¹Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. Then Yahweh sent a strong wind from the east. It blew all night and pushed the water apart, and it caused the land between the water to dry up. ²²Then the Israelites went on the dry land in the middle of the sea. The water was like a wall on each side of them, on the right side and on the left side.

²³Then the Egyptian army went after them into the middle of the sea with their horses, chariots, and horsemen.

²⁴Just before dawn, Yahweh looked down from the fiery cloud, and then he caused the Egyptian army to panic.

²⁵He caused the wheels of the chariots to get stuck in the ground so that they could hardly move. So the Egyptians said, "Yahweh is fighting for the Israelites against us; we must escape from them!"

²⁶Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your arm over the sea. Then the water will come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and their horsemen." ²⁷So Moses stretched out his arm above the sea, and the water returned to its normal level just before dawn. The Egyptians tried to escape, but Yahweh hurled them back into the sea. ²⁸The water returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and the whole Egyptian army that had tried to follow the Israelites into the sea. Every one of the Egyptians died.

²⁹But the Israelites had already crossed through the sea by walking on dry ground. The water was like two walls, one on the right side and one on the left side. ³⁰That is the way Yahweh saved the Israelites from the Egyptian army on that day. The Israelites saw the Egyptians lying dead. Their bodies washed up on the shore. ³¹The Israelites saw what Yahweh powerfully did to the Egyptians, and they revered Yahweh. They trusted Yahweh and his servant Moses.

Chapter 15

¹Then Moses and all the Israelites sang this song to Yahweh. They each sang,

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

He has thrown the horses and the charioteers into the sea!

²Yahweh makes me strong, and I will sing about him.

He has saved me.

He is my God, and I will celebrate {because of what he did for me}.

He was my father's God, and I will tell others how great he is.

³Yahweh is a warrior;

Yahweh is his name.

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

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

⁵The deep water covered them;

they sank to the bottom like a rock.

⁶O Yahweh, your power is immense;

with that power, O Yahweh, you have crushed the enemy into pieces.

⁷You use your great strength to defeat your enemies.

When you are angry, you destroy them
like a fire burns up straw.

⁸You blew on the sea, and the water piled up high;

the water became like mounds of dirt.

In the deepest part of the sea, the water became thick, as though it were frozen.

⁹Our enemies said,

'We will go after them

and catch up to them.

We will do whatever we want to them!

We will draw our swords

and defeat them;

then we will divide up everything we take from them.'

¹⁰Your wind blew,

and then the sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the big waves.

¹¹Yahweh, there is no other god like you!

There is no one like you!

You are wonderfully different from everything else.

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

¹²You used your power

to make the earth open and our enemies go down into it!

¹³You are leading the people you bought because you always love us;

Because {you use} your strength {for our good}, you are guiding us to the home that you set apart.

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

and they will tremble.

The people in Philistia will be terrified.

¹⁵The chiefs in Edom will be dismayed.

The leaders in Moab will be so afraid that they will shake.

All those who live in Canaan will faint.

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

But they will be as silent as stones
until we, your people, march past them,
the people you freed {from being slaves in Egypt.}
¹⁷You will bring us {into the promised land of Canaan.}
You will enable us to live on your hill,
in the place that you, Yahweh, have chosen to be your home,
in the holy place, our Lord,
that you yourself will build.

¹⁸O Yahweh, you will rule forever!"

¹⁹When the king's horses and chariots and horsemen tried to go through the sea, Yahweh caused the water to come back and cover them. But the Israelite people walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground. ²⁰Then Miriam, who was Aaron's older sister and a prophetess, picked up her tambourine and led all the other women who had tambourines out to dance. ²¹Miriam sang to Yahweh this song: "Sing to Yahweh because he has triumphed gloriously over his enemies. He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea."

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

²⁷After they left Marah, they came to a place named Elim. There were 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees there. So they camped there.

Chapter 16

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

⁴Yahweh said to Moses, "Watch what I am going to do. I am going to send bread from the sky for you. When I do that, the people must go out of their tents every day and gather enough to eat on that day. When I do that, I will find out whether they will obey me or not. ⁵On the sixth day {of each week}, they should gather and prepare twice as much as on the other days {so they do not have to gather any on the seventh day}."

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelite people, "This evening you will know that it was Yahweh{, not us,} who brought you out of Egypt. ⁷In the morning you will see how great Yahweh is, because he has heard how you have complained against him. We are not important enough for your complaints." ⁸Then Moses also said, "Each evening Yahweh will give you meat to eat, and each morning he will give you enough bread to make you full. He has heard how you have complained about him. We are unimportant; when you complain, it is really about Yahweh, not us."

⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, "Tell all the Israelite people, 'Come and stand here in the presence of Yahweh, because he has heard what you have been complaining about.'" ¹⁰So as Aaron told the Israelites that, they turned to look toward the desert and were surprised to see the dazzling light of Yahweh in the cloud {that had been leading them}.

¹¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹²"I have heard what the Israelites have been complaining about. So say to them, 'At twilight, you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have bread. You will have all you want of it to eat. Then you will know that I am Yahweh, your God.'"

¹³That evening quails appeared, and there were so many that they covered the campsite. The next morning there were small drops of water all around the campsite. ¹⁴When the water on the ground dried up, they saw a thin layer of something that looked like {small white} flakes on the desert ground. It looked like a thin layer of ice on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they did not know what it was, so they said to each other, "What is it?"

Moses replied to them, "It is the food Yahweh has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is what Yahweh has commanded: Each of you should gather as much as you need to eat. Gather two liters for each person who lives in your tents." ¹⁷So that is what the Israelite people did. Some gathered more and some gathered less. ¹⁸Because they gathered two liters per person, when they measured what they had gathered, those who had gathered a lot did not have anything left over. Those who had gathered less still had enough to eat. Each person gathered just enough.

¹⁹Moses said to them, "Do not leave any of it to eat tomorrow morning!" ²⁰Some of them did not obey what Moses said. They kept some of it until the next morning. However, it was full of maggots and smelled rotten. That made Moses angry. ²¹Each morning they gathered as much as they needed. Later, when the sun got hot, what was left on the ground melted.

²²On the sixth day, each person was able to gather four liters of bread, which was twice as much as they gathered on the other days. When the leaders of the people came to Moses and told him about that, ²³Moses said to them, "This is what Yahweh has told you: Tomorrow will be a day for you to rest. It will be a day set apart for Yahweh. So today, bake or boil what you will need for today and for tomorrow. Whatever is left this evening, you should put aside and keep it to eat tomorrow."

²⁴So they did what Moses told them. What was left over, they kept until the next day. It did not spoil and did not get maggots in it! ²⁵On that day, Moses said, "Eat today what you have saved from yesterday because today is a day of rest to Yahweh. Today you will not find any of that food outside. ²⁶Every week, you must gather it for six days; but on the seventh day, which will be a day of rest for you, there will not be any to gather."

²⁷On the seventh day, some of the people went outside their tents to gather some of that food, but could not find any. ²⁸Then Yahweh told Moses to say this to the people: "Yahweh is angry because for a long time you people have refused to do all the things that he has told you to do! ²⁹Listen! Since Yahweh has given you a day of rest, on the sixth day of each week, he will therefore be giving you enough of this food for two days. Each of you should stay in his tent, not going anywhere on the seventh day!" ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹The Israelites called this food 'manna.' It looked white, like the color of coriander seeds, and it tasted like thin wafers made with honey. ³²Moses said, "This is what Yahweh has told you: 'You must keep two liters of it for all future generations so that they can see the food that I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt.'"

³³And he said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put two liters of manna in it. Then put it in a place where Yahweh can see it. You must keep it like that for all future generations." ³⁴{Later} Aaron {would} put the jar in front of the record of the agreement between Yahweh and Israel in order to keep the manna as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ³⁵The Israelites ate manna every day for forty years until they came to where there were people, at the border of the land of Canaan. ³⁶{Now two liters is called} an omer, which is a tenth of an ephah.

Chapter 17

¹Then Yahweh commanded all the Israelites to travel from the wilderness of Sin and camp at a place called Rephidim, and they did. However, there was no water there for the people to drink. ²So the people complained to Moses again, saying, "Give us water to drink!"

Moses replied to them, "You should not quarrel with me! You should not test Yahweh!"

³But the people were very thirsty, and they continued to complain to Moses. They were saying, "You only brought us out here to kill us and our children and cattle by not letting us have any water to drink!"

⁴So Moses prayed to Yahweh. He said, "How shall I deal with these people? They are almost ready {to kill me} by throwing stones {at me}!"

⁵Yahweh said to Moses, "Lead the people and walk in front of them. Take some of the elders of the Israelite people with you. Carry in your hand the staff you used to strike the Nile River. ⁶Watch me! I will stand in front of you on top of a large rock at the foot of Mount Sinai. Strike the rock with your stick. When you do that, water for the people to drink will flow out of the rock." Moses did what God had said, and the elders saw it happen. ⁷Moses named that place both Masseh (because the Israelites tested Yahweh by questioning if he was really able to help them or not) and Meribah (because they were complaining all the time to him).

⁸Then the people of Amalek came and fought against the Israelite people at Rephidim. ⁹Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight against the people of Amalek tomorrow. I will stand on the top of the hill, holding the staff that God told me to carry." ¹⁰So Joshua obeyed Moses. He {took some men} to fight against the people of Amalek.

{While they were fighting,} Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill {so that they could see the whole battle area}. ¹¹Then this happened: Whenever Moses lifted up his arms, the Israelite men started to win the battle; whenever he lowered his arms, the Amalekite army started to win. ¹²But Moses' arms became tired. So Aaron and Hur brought a large stone for him to sit on. While he was sitting on it, those two held up his arms, one man on either side of him. In that way, they kept his arms lifted up until the sun went down. ¹³In this way Joshua and the men with him defeated the Amalekite king and his army in battle.

¹⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Write an account of this battle and then read it to Joshua. Also write that I will so completely destroy the people of Amalek that no one in the world will remember who they were." ¹⁵Then Moses built a stone altar there and named it "Yahweh is my flag." ¹⁶He said, "Because they fought against him, Yahweh will fight against the people of Amalek forever!"

Chapter 18

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

⁵While Moses {and the Israelites} camped in the wilderness near {Sinai}, God's {holy} mountain, Jethro (Moses's father-in-law) came to him, bringing along Moses' wife and two sons. ⁶Jethro had sent a message to Moses, "I, your father-in-law, Jethro, am coming to see you. I am bringing your wife and her two sons!" ⁷So Moses went out {of the campsite} to meet his father-in-law. He bowed before him and kissed him {on the cheek}. They both asked each

other, "Have you been well?" Then they went into {Moses'} tent. ⁸Moses told Jethro everything that Yahweh had done to the king {and all the other people in Egypt} in order to help the Israelite people. He also told him about the troubles they had experienced on the way, and about how Yahweh had helped them.

⁹Jethro praised Yahweh when he heard that Yahweh had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and had been very good to them. ¹⁰He said, "Praise Yahweh, who has rescued you from the powerful Egyptian {army} and from the powerful Egyptian king and has set the Israelites free from the control of the Egyptians! ¹¹Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods, because he rescued the Israelites from their proud enemies." ¹²Then Jethro (who was Moses' father-in-law) brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices for God. Aaron and the Israelite elders came and ate a meal with Moses' father-in-law to honor God.

¹³The next day, Moses sat down at the place where he settled disputes among the people. The people asked Moses to judge their disputes from the morning until the evening. ¹⁴When Jethro saw everything that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "Do not lead the people this way. You should not sit here alone letting everyone demand that you judge for them all day!"

¹⁵Moses replied to his father-in-law, "I am doing this because the people keep coming to me to find out what God desires. ¹⁶When they cannot agree about something, they come to me, and they ask me to decide which of them is right. When I decide, I also explain to them how God's laws and instructions apply in that situation."

¹⁷Jethro said to him, "What you are doing is not beneficial. ¹⁸You and these people will wear yourselves out! This work is too much for you. You are not able to do it by yourself. ¹⁹Now listen to what I will tell you to do. If you do what I suggest, God will help you. You should continue to represent the people to God and tell him about the people's disputes. ²⁰You should also teach them God's law and instructions. You should also explain to them how they should act and the things that they should do. ²¹In addition, you should find some capable Israelite men to help you. Choose men who respect God, who are trustworthy, and who will not accept bribes. Appoint some of them to make decisions for groups of ten people, some for groups of fifty people, some for groups of a hundred people, and some for groups of a thousand people. ²²Allow them to settle disputes for the people usually. It should work like this: The difficult matters they can bring to you, but the matters that are simple, they can decide themselves. Do this to make the work easier for you as they help you do that work. ²³If you do that, you will be able to continue doing what God commands, and all the people will be able to live peacefully with each other."

²⁴Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that Jethro told him. ²⁵Then Moses chose capable men from among the Israelite people and made them chiefs over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²⁶They usually settled disputes for the people. They brought the difficult cases to Moses, but they decided the simple cases by themselves.

²⁷Then Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro returned home.

Chapter 19

¹On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. ²After they left Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and they set up their tents at the base of the mountain.

³Moses climbed up {the mountain to talk} with God. Yahweh called to him from {the top} of the mountain and said, "This is what I want you to say to the Israelite people, the descendants of Jacob, ⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You have seen what I did for you and how I brought you here to me as if I had carried you on top of eagles' wings. ⁵Therefore, if you very carefully do what I tell you to do and obey all that I require in what we agreed by swearing to, you will be my own people. You will be my personal property from among all of the nations. Although all the earth is mine, ⁶you will be my priestly kingdom and a nation dedicated to me.' That is what you must tell the Israelites."

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

⁹Then Yahweh said to Moses "Listen carefully. I will come to you from inside a thick cloud. When I am speaking to you, the people will hear it, and they will always believe that you are their leader." Then Moses told Yahweh what the people said.

¹⁰Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go back down to the people again. {Tell them to get ready for my coming.} They must purify themselves today and tomorrow. They must also wash their clothes ¹¹so they will be ready on the third day. On that day I will come down to Mount Sinai to where all the people can see me. ¹²You must make a boundary around the base of the mountain to protect the people. Tell them, 'Be sure that you do not climb the mountain or even touch it. You must kill anyone who touches the base of the mountain. ¹³Do not let anyone touch any person or any animal that touches the mountain. Therefore, you must kill any person or animal that touches the mountain by throwing stones at it or shooting it with arrows.' But when you hear a long, loud trumpet sound, the people can come close to the base of the mountain."

¹⁴So Moses went down the mountain again and told the people to purify {themselves and to get ready for Yahweh's coming. They did what Moses told them to do,} and they also washed their clothes. ¹⁵Then Moses said to the people, "Be ready on the third day, and you men must not have sexual relations with any women {until after then}."

¹⁶On the third day, during the morning, there was thunder, lightning, a very dark cloud on the mountain, and a very loud horn sound. The people in the camp shook because they were very afraid. ¹⁷Then Moses led the people outside the camp to meet with God. They stood around the base of the mountain. ¹⁸Then Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai, surrounded by fire. That caused the entire mountain to smoke. The smoke rose up like the smoke from the chimney of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹As the sound of the horn continued to become louder, Moses spoke to God, and God answered him in a thunderous voice.

²⁰Then Yahweh came down again onto the top of Mount Sinai, and he summoned Moses to come up to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up. ²¹Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down again and warn the people not to cross the boundary in order to look at me. If they do that, many of them will die. ²²Also, the priests who come near me must purify themselves. If they do not do that, I will punish them."

²³Then Moses said to Yahweh, "The people will not climb the mountain because you commanded them, saying, 'Set a boundary around the mountain, to consecrate it.'"

²⁴Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down the mountain and bring Aaron back up with you. But do not allow the priests or other people to cross the boundary to come up to me. If they cross it, I will punish them." ²⁵So Moses went down the mountain again and told the people what Yahweh had said.

Chapter 20

¹Then God spoke these words to the Israelites. ²"I am Yahweh your God, the one you worship. I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you from being slaves there. ³Do not worship any god other than me.

⁴Do not carve yourself a figure that looks like anything in the sky or that is on the ground or that is in the water under the ground. ⁵Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am Yahweh your God. I demand that you worship me only! I will punish the descendants of those who hate me. I will punish their descendants for three, even four generations. ⁶However, I will faithfully love thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments.

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

⁸Remember that the seventh day of every week belongs to me. ⁹There are six days each week for you to do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a day of rest, a day dedicated to me, Yahweh your God. On that day you must not do any work. Neither you nor your sons, your daughters, your male or female slaves, your livestock, and not even foreigners who are living in your country may work. ¹¹Do this because I, Yahweh, created the sky, the earth, the ocean, and everything that is in them in six days. Then I stopped my work of creating everything and rested on the seventh day. That is the reason that I, Yahweh, have blessed the rest day and set it apart to be a sacred day.

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

¹³Do not murder anyone.

¹⁴Do not commit adultery with anyone.

¹⁵Do not steal anything.

¹⁶Do not falsely accuse anyone of committing a crime.

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

¹⁸When the people heard the thunder and saw the lightning, and when they heard the sound of the horn and saw the smoke on the mountain, they were afraid and trembled. They stood a safe distance away ¹⁹and said to Moses, "You talk to us! We will listen! But do not let God speak to us anymore. We are afraid that if he speaks anymore to us, we will die."

²⁰Moses replied to the people, "Do not be afraid! God has come to observe how you will behave. He wants you to honor him and to not sin."

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

²²Yahweh said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelite people, 'You have heard how I, Yahweh, have spoken to you from heaven. ²³Therefore, do not make any gods of silver or gold that you will worship instead of me. ²⁴Make an altar out of earth for me. Sacrifice your burnt offerings on it, your offerings to promise friendship with me, and also your sheep and oxen. Worship me in any place that I choose for you to honor me; if you do that, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵If you build an altar for me out of stone, do not cut the stones because the cutting tool will profane the altar. ²⁶Do not climb steps to my altar so that no one may see your genitals.'

Chapter 21

¹These are the laws that you must establish for the Israelite nation:

²When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve you for only six years. In the seventh year you must free him from being your slave, and he does not have to pay you anything for setting him free. ³If he became your slave alone, you will free him alone. But if he had a wife, you must free both him and his wife. ⁴If the master of a slave gives him a wife, and she gives birth to sons or daughters while her husband is a slave, you only have to free the man. His wife and children will continue to be slaves of their master. ⁵But when it is time for you to free the slave if he clearly states: 'I love my master and my wife and my children, and I do not want to go free,' ⁶then his master must take him to the place where they worship God. There he must make the slave stand against the door or the doorpost. Then the master will use an awl to make a hole in the slave's ear and he will own that slave for the rest of his life.

⁷If a man sells his daughter to become a slave, she should not go free like the male slaves. ⁸If the man who bought her wanted her to be his concubine, but later he is not pleased with her, he must sell her back to her father. He must not sell her to a foreigner, because that was not what he and the girl's father agreed to. ⁹If the man who buys her wants her to be a wife for his son, he must then treat her as though she were his own daughter. ¹⁰If the master marries another woman, he must continue to give the first woman the same amount of food, clothing, and sexual attention that he gave to her before. ¹¹If he does not do these three things for her, he must free her from being a slave, and she is not required to pay anything to go free.

¹²If someone hits a man in order to kill him and the man dies, then you absolutely must execute the murderer; ¹³but if he did not plan the murder—if God allowed the accident—the one who hit him can escape to a place that I will choose for you, and he will be safe there. ¹⁴But if someone gets angry with another person and kills him on purpose, you must kill the murderer even if he runs to God's altar.

¹⁵You must kill anyone who strikes his father or mother.

¹⁶You must kill anyone who kidnaps another person, whether he sold the person or you found him still with the kidnapper.

¹⁷You must kill anyone who curses or insults his father or his mother.

¹⁸Suppose two people fight, and one hits the other with a stone or his fist. Suppose the person he strikes does not die but is injured and has to stay in bed for a while, ¹⁹but later he is able to walk outside using a cane. Then they must not punish the person who hit him, except that they must make him pay the injured person the money he could not earn while he was recovering as well as the costs for healing.

²⁰If someone hits his male or female slave with a stick, and if the slave dies from the blow, then you must avenge the slave's death. ²¹But if the slave recovers after a few days, you must not punish the one who hit him, because the slave was his property.

²²If some men are fighting, and they hit a pregnant woman so that she gives birth, but she and the baby are unharmed, whoever hit her must pay a fine. He must pay whatever the woman's husband asks after a judge approves of the fine. ²³But if he harmed anyone {you must punish him by causing the same harm to him}. If he killed someone, you must kill him. ²⁴{In the same way, if he harmed} an eye, a tooth, a hand, or a foot, ²⁵or caused a burn, a wound, or a bruise—{you must cause the same harm to him}.

²⁶If the owner of a slave strikes the eye of his male or female slave and that eye becomes blind, then he must free that slave because of what he did to the slave's eye. ²⁷If someone knocks out one of his slave's teeth, he must free the slave because of what he did to the slave's tooth.

²⁸If a bull gores a man or woman with the result that the person dies, you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, but do not eat it. The owner of the bull is not guilty. ²⁹But if the bull had attacked people several times before and if people had told its owner about that, but he did not keep the bull inside a fence, and it kills a man or woman by goring, then you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, and you must also kill its owner. ³⁰However, if {the family of the dead} chooses to demand compensation instead, to save his life he must pay the full amount they demand. ³¹If someone's bull attacks and gores someone's son or daughter, you must treat the bull's owner according to that same rule. ³²If a bull attacks and gores a male or female slave, its owner must pay to the slave's owner thirty pieces of silver, and you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it.

³³Suppose someone uncovers a hole for storing water or digs one and does not cover it. If someone's bull or donkey falls into it {and dies}, ³⁴the owner of the pit must give the animal's owner as much money as the animal was worth, but then he will own the dead animal.

³⁵If someone's bull hurts another person's bull, so that it dies, the owners of both bulls must sell the bull that is living, and they must divide between them the money that they get for it. They must also divide between them the

meat of the animal that died. ³⁶However, if the owner knew that the bull often attacked other animals before, and he did not secure it, then the owner of that bull must give the owner of the bull that died a living bull, but then he will own the dead animal.

Chapter 22

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

²If someone finds a thief breaking into his house {at night} and hits him and the thief dies, he is not guilty of murder. ³But if that happens during the daytime, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murdering him.

A thief must pay for what he stole. If he has nothing with which to pay for what he stole, the judges must sell him to become a slave, and the money from his sale will pay for what he stole. ⁴In a case where you catch a thief and he still has the stolen goods, if it is a bull or a donkey or a sheep, and it is still alive, the thief must pay back the stolen animal as well as another one of the same kind.

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

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

⁷Suppose that someone gives another person some money or other items and asks him to keep it in his house for a while. And suppose that a thief steals it from that person's house. If you catch the thief, the thief must pay back twice as much as he stole. ⁸But if no one catches the thief, you must bring the owner of the house to God so he {can swear} that he did not take his neighbor's property. ⁹Whenever someone claims his neighbor wronged him and says, 'This is actually mine,' about a bull, a donkey, a sheep, clothing, or something else he lost, they must both come and stand before God. The one whom God says is wrong must pay back the owner twice as much as he took.

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

¹¹Then the person who was taking care of the animal must swear, knowing that Yahweh is listening, that he did not steal the item. The owner of the animal must accept that the other person is telling the truth, and the other person will not have to pay anything back to the owner. ¹²But if someone stole the animal while he was supposed to be taking care of it, the man who promised to take care of it must pay back the owner for the animal. ¹³If wild animals mauled the animal, he must bring back its remains to prove that what he says is true. If he does that, he will not have to pay anything for the mauled animal.

¹⁴If someone borrows an animal from his neighbor, and if something hurts or kills that animal when its owner is not there, the one who borrowed it must pay the owner for the animal. ¹⁵But if that happens when the owner of the animal is there, the one who borrowed it will not have to pay back anything. If someone rented it, the money that he paid to rent it will be enough to pay for the animal dying or for an injury.

¹⁶If a man tricks a virgin girl whose {father} has not yet promised her to be anyone's bride into having sexual intercourse with him, he must pay the bride price for her and marry her. ¹⁷But if her father does not allow her to marry him, he must still pay the girl's father as much money as men pay to marry a virgin.

¹⁸You must kill any woman who practices sorcery.

¹⁹You must kill any person who has sexual intercourse with an animal.

²⁰You must kill anyone who offers a sacrifice to any god other than Yahweh.

²¹You must not abuse or subjugate foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

²²You must not mistreat any widow or any orphan. ²³If you mistreat them and they ask me to help them, I will help them. ²⁴Because I will be angry with you, I will cause you to die in war. Your wives will become widows, and your children will become orphans.

²⁵If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender by requiring him to pay interest on the money. ²⁶If you make him give you his cloak to guarantee that he will pay the money back, you must give the cloak back to him before the sun goes down, ²⁷because his cloak is the only thing he has to cover his body when he sleeps. When he complains about you to me, I will help him because I am merciful.

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

²⁹Do not withhold from me the best parts of the grain that you harvest or of the olive oil or the wine that you produce.

You will give your firstborn sons to me. ³⁰Similarly, your firstborn male cattle and sheep belong to me. After those animals are born, allow them to stay with their mothers for seven days. On the eighth day you will give them to me.

³¹You are my set apart people, so do not eat any meat from any animal that a wild animal killed. Instead, throw it where the dogs can eat it.

Chapter 23

¹Do not speak falsely in court. Do not help an evil man by testifying maliciously. ²Do not join a group of people who are planning to do something evil. Do not tell the same lies they do and so keep the judge from deciding the case justly. ³Do not prefer someone in court just because he is poor.

⁴If you see someone's bull or donkey when it is wandering away loose, take it back to its owner even if the owner is your enemy. ⁵If you see someone's donkey that has fallen down because of its heavy load, help the owner to get the donkey up again even if he is someone who hates you. Do not just walk away without helping him.

⁶Decide the cases of poor people who are on trial as fairly as you judge the cases of other people. ⁷Do not deceive others. Do not kill guiltless or upright people, because I will not say that evil people are good. ⁸Do not accept a bribe, because good judges who take bribes do not judge wisely, and they unfairly judge against the person who is right.

⁹Do not mistreat foreigners who live among you. You know how foreigners often feel, because you lived as foreigners in Egypt.

¹⁰For six years, plant seeds in your ground and gather the harvest. ¹¹But in the seventh year you must leave the ground fallow. Allow your poor countrymen to eat {what grows on its own}. Whatever is left over is for the wild animals to eat. Do the same thing with your grapevine and your olive trees.

¹²You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day you must rest and not work. Do this so that your ox and donkey may rest. The rest day will also let your slaves and the foreigners who live among you recuperate.

¹³Make certain that you obey everything that I have commanded you to do. Do not pray to other gods. Do not even mention their names.

¹⁴Every year you must travel to three celebrations to honor me:

¹⁵Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread the way that I commanded you: eat unleavened bread for seven days in the month called Aviv. I set this time because it is the month when you left Egypt. Do not come to worship me without bringing an offering.

¹⁶{The second celebration is the Spring} Harvest Celebration. {During that celebration you must offer to me} the first parts of your crops that grow from the seeds that you planted.

{The third celebration is} the Finished Harvest Celebration. That will be at the end of the year, after you finish harvesting everything you planted.

¹⁷These three times every year, all the men must gather together to worship me, the Lord Yahweh.

¹⁸Do not sacrifice bread you made with yeast along with blood from an animal sacrifice. Do not keep the fat from the animals you sacrificed at my celebration until the next morning. {Burn it completely.} ¹⁹{Each year, when you harvest your crops,} take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh your God. {When you kill} a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk.

²⁰Look! I am going to send an angel ahead of you to guard you as you travel and to lead you to the place that I have made ready for you. ²¹Respect and obey him. Do not make him angry, because he will not forgive your sin, because my authority and presence is in him. ²²But if you obey his commands well and if you do all that I tell you to do, I will fight against all of your enemies and adversaries. ²³Then my angel will go ahead of you and will take you to where the Amor, Heth, Periz, Canaan, Hiv, and Jebus people groups live, and I will completely get rid of them. ²⁴Do not bow down before their gods or worship them. Do not do the things that they {think that their gods want them to} do. Instead, destroy {their gods} and smash to pieces their sacred stones.

²⁵You must worship me, Yahweh your God. If you do that, I will bless your food and water, and I will protect you from becoming sick. ²⁶No women in your land will have miscarriages, and no women will be unable to become pregnant. I will enable you to live a long time.

²⁷{I will go} ahead of you and terrify and confuse all the people into whose {lands} you are going. {When you fight} your enemies, I will make them run away from you. ²⁸I will send wasps ahead of you who will drive the Hiv, Canaan, and Heth people groups from your land. ²⁹I will not remove all of them in less than one year. If I did that, your land would become deserted, and there would be very many wild animals that would attack you. ³⁰I will remove those people groups slowly, a few at a time, until the number of your people increases and you are able to live everywhere in the land. ³¹I will make your country's borders be from the Red Sea {in the southeast} to the {Mediterranean} Sea by the Philistines {in the northwest}, and from the wilderness {of Sinai in the southwest} to the {Euphrates} River {in the northeast of the country}. I will give you the power to remove the people who live there, so that you will remove them as you occupy more of the country.

³²You must not make any agreement with those people or with their gods. ³³Do not allow those people to live in your land, so they do not cause you to sin against me by enticing you to worship their gods."

Chapter 24

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses. "Come up to me {on top of this mountain}, you and Aaron and {his sons} Nadab and Abihu. Also take along seventy of the Israelite elders. You will all worship me at an {appropriate} distance. ²Moses, you will come near to me alone. The others must not come near, and the rest of the people must not come up the mountain with you."

³Moses went and told the people everything that Yahweh had said and all that he had commanded. The people all replied together, saying, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do." ⁴Then Moses wrote down everything that Yahweh had commanded. Moses woke early the next morning and built an altar at the bottom of the mountain. He also set up twelve stones, one for each of the Israelite tribes. ⁵Then he sent some young Israelite

men to burn sacrifices to Yahweh and to sacrifice some bulls as offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh.

⁶Moses took half of the blood of the animals that they slaughtered and put it in bowls. The other half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷Then he loudly read the scroll on which he had written everything that Yahweh and the people were promising each other so all the people could hear it. Then all the people said, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do. We will obey everything."

⁸Then Moses took the blood {that was in the bowls} and threw it on the people. He said, "This is the blood that confirms what Yahweh is agreeing with you—what you just heard and agreed to."

⁹Then Moses and Aaron along with Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy Israelite elders went up {the mountain}, ¹⁰and they saw God, the one whom the Israelites worship. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of blue stones called sapphires. They were as clear as the sky is when there are no clouds. ¹¹God did not harm those Israelite elders {even though they saw him}. They saw God, and they ate and drank together.

¹²Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Come up to me on top of this mountain and wait there. I will give you stone slabs, my law, and my commandments, all of which I have written so that you may teach them to the people."

¹³Then Moses started out with his assistant Joshua. He went {part of the way} up the mountain where God was.

¹⁴Moses told the elders, "Stay here until we return. Do not forget that Aaron and Hur will be with you, so if anyone disputes {with his neighbor while I am gone}, he can go to them {and they will judge it}."

¹⁵Then Moses went {the rest of the way} up the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶Yahweh's glory came down onto the mountain and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day, Yahweh called to Moses from the middle of the cloud. ¹⁷To the Israelites, Yahweh's glory looked like a fire consuming the top of the mountain. ¹⁸Moses went into the cloud on top of the mountain and was there for 40 days and nights.

Chapter 25

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Tell the Israelites that everyone who wants to may give a gift to me. You will receive their gifts for me. ³These are the types of gifts that you should collect from them: gold, silver, bronze, ⁴{cloth dyed} blue, {cloth dyed} purple, {cloth dyed} bright red, fine linen, {cloth made from} goats' hair, ⁵red ram skins, fine leather hides, the hard wood from acacia trees, ⁶{olive} oil to burn in the lamps, spices to mix with the {olive} oil for anointing {the priests}, and spices to mix into the sweet-smelling incense, ⁷onyx stones and other expensive stones for fastening to the priest's sacred apron and for putting on the chest pouch that attaches to the apron.

⁸The people should make a holy place for me so that I can live in it among them. ⁹They must make my pavilion and all the things that they will use inside it precisely according to the plan that I will show you.

¹⁰Have the people make a sacred chest from acacia wood. They should make it 125 centimeters long, 75 centimeters wide and 75 centimeters high. ¹¹Cover the chest with pure gold inside and outside and put a gold molding all around it. ¹²Make four rings from gold, and fasten them to the four legs of the chest. Put two of the rings on each side of the chest. ¹³Make two poles from acacia wood, and cover them with gold. ¹⁴Put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that {the Levites} can carry the chest by the poles. ¹⁵Always leave the poles in the chest's rings; do not take the poles out of the rings. ¹⁶Put the stone slabs, which I am giving you and on which I wrote my commands, inside the chest.

¹⁷You must make a lid for the chest from pure gold. It will be 125 centimeters long and 75 centimeters wide.

¹⁸Hammer the gold at both ends of the lid into the form of two creatures that have wings. ¹⁹Make the winged creatures {from the gold} at each end of the sacred chest's lid, one at one end and the other at the other end.

²⁰The creature's wings should spread out and reach up to cover the lid. They should face each other, facing the chest's lid that is between them. ²¹Put the stone slabs that I am giving you inside the sacred chest. Then place the lid onto the top of the chest. ²²I will set times to talk with you there. I will tell to you all my commands that you

must command the Israelites from above the sacred chest's lid, between the two winged creatures which are above the sacred chest that contains my law tablets.

²³Make a table from acacia wood. It is to be one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. ²⁴Cover the table with pure gold and put a gold molding all around it. ²⁵Make a rim all around it, eight centimeters wide, and make a gold molding around the rim. ²⁶Make four rings from gold. Fasten them to the four corners of the table. Each ring should be close to each table leg ²⁷near the rim. They are to hold poles for carrying the table. ²⁸Make two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. Use them to carry the table. ²⁹Also make dishes, cups, jars, and bowls for the priests to use to pour out {wine to offer to me}. Make them all from pure gold. ³⁰Present the sacred bread to me on the table at all times.

³¹Make a lampstand from pure gold. Hammer {one large lump of gold} to make its base and its shaft. Make the cups, with the flower buds and petals {that decorate them}, from that same lump. ³²There are to be six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. ³³Each branch will have three gold cups that look like almond flowers on it. The flowers will have buds and petals. Do this for all six branches of the lampstand. ³⁴On {the shaft of} the lampstand there are to be four cups that also look like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. ³⁵Make one flower bud beneath every two branches. Attach it to each pair of branches {as if they are growing} from it. Make all six lampstand branches like this. ³⁶Hammer all these buds and branches{, along with the shaft,} from one {large lump} of pure gold. ³⁷Make seven lamps and place them on the lampstand so that its light shines all around it. ³⁸{Make} tongs from pure gold, {to remove the burned wicks} and trays {in which to put the burned wicks}. ³⁹Use 33 kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays.

⁴⁰Make sure to make {these things} according to the instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

Chapter 26

¹As for the sacred tent, make it using ten long hangings of finely twisted linen. A skilled craftsman must take blue, purple, and red thread, and embroider these hangings with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. ²Make each hanging 14.5 meters long and two meters wide. Make them all the same size. ³Sew five hangings together {as one set}, and sew the other five hangings together {as another set}. ⁴For each set, make loops of blue cloth and fasten them along the outer edge of the hanging, at the end of each set. ⁵Put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops at the edge of the second set so that the loops are opposite to each other. ⁶Make 50 gold fasteners and fasten both of the sets together with them to make the sacred tent one unit.

⁷Make a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats' hair. ⁸Each of the 11 pieces of cloth will be the same dimensions: 15 meters long and two meters wide. ⁹Sew five of these pieces of cloth together {to make one set}, and sew the other six pieces of cloth together {to make another set}. Fold the sixth piece of cloth in half to make it double over the front of the cover. ¹⁰Make {100 loops of blue cloth,} and fasten 50 of them to the outer edge of the one set and fasten 50 to the outer edge of the other set. ¹¹Make 50 bronze hooks and fasten the hooks to the loops to connect them, so the cover will be one unit. ¹²Let the extra part of the tent cover, the half piece that extends beyond the linen cloth, hang over the back side of the sacred tent. ¹³The extra half-meter of cover on each side, the part that extends beyond the linen cloth, must hang over the two sides of the sacred tent to protect the sides. ¹⁴Make another cover to go over the tent from red rams' skins, and a top cover from fine leather hides.

¹⁵Make a standing framework from acacia wood for the sacred tent. ¹⁶Each frame is to be five meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. ¹⁷Make two pegs {at the bottom of} each frame to fasten them together. Make each frame for the tabernacle this way. ¹⁸Make 20 frames for the south side of the sacred tent. ¹⁹Make 40 silver bases to go underneath the 20 frames. Put two bases under each frame and fit their two pegs into the bases. ²⁰For the other side—{that is,} the north side—of the sacred tent {make} 20 frames ²¹and 40 silver bases for them. {Put} two bases under each frame. ²²For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, make six frames. ²³Make two

frames for the rear corners of the sacred tent. ²⁴Match them to each other at the bottom and top. Secure the tops together with a ring. Do this for both, making them the corner pieces. ²⁵Make eight frames and 16 silver bases, two bases under each frame.

²⁶Make crossbars from acacia wood. Make five crossbars for the frames on the {north} side of the sacred tent, ²⁷five crossbars for the frames on the {south} side of the sacred tent, and five crossbars for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, the west side. ²⁸The center crossbar, right in the middle of the frames, will reach all the way from edge to edge. ²⁹Cover the frames and crossbars with gold. Make the rings for fastening the crossbars to the frames from gold. ³⁰Build the sacred tent in the way that I have shown you here on this mountain.

³¹Make a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest. ³²Suspend the curtain from gold hooks on four gold-covered posts made from acacia wood. Set each post in a silver base. ³³Suspend the curtain from fasteners {attached to the roof of the sacred tent}. Put the sacred chest behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. ³⁴Put the lid on top of the sacred chest in the Most Holy Place. ³⁵Put the table and the lampstand on the other side of the curtain on opposite sides from each other. Put the lampstand on the south side of the sacred tent, and put the table for the sacred bread on the north side. ³⁶Make a curtain as the tent entrance. A skilled weaver must make it from fine linen with blue, purple, and red yarn. ³⁷To hold up this curtain, make five posts from acacia wood. Cover them with gold and fasten gold clasps to them. Also make a bronze base for each of these posts.

Chapter 27

¹Make an altar from acacia wood. Make it square: two and a half meters long on each side and one and a half meters tall. ²Make a {projection that looks like a} horn on each of the top corners. Make them from the same block of wood as the altar. Cover the whole altar with bronze. ³Make all its implements from bronze. Make pans to collect the ashes from burning the fat, shovels {for cleaning out the ashes}, basins, forks {for turning the meat as it cooks}, and buckets {for carrying hot coals}. ⁴Make a bronze lattice grating {to hold the wood and burning coals}. Fasten a bronze ring to each of the four corners of the grate. ⁵Put the grating under the rim that is around the altar. Make it so that it is inside the altar, halfway down. ⁶Make poles for {carrying} the altar from acacia wood and cover them with bronze. ⁷Put the poles through the rings on each side of the altar to carry it. ⁸Make the altar from boards and make it hollow in the middle. They must make it according to these instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

⁹Also make a courtyard around the sacred tent with more curtains of fine linen. For the south side, hang 50 meters of curtain ¹⁰from 20 {bronze} posts. {Make} 20 bronze bases for the posts and hooks on them and silver connectors. ¹¹And likewise for the north side {of the courtyard: hang} 50 meters of curtains from 20 posts, with their 20 bronze bases, hooks, and silver connectors. ¹²{Make} a curtain 25 meters long along the west side of the courtyard. {Support them} with ten posts, with a base under each post. ¹³On the east side the courtyard must also be 25 meters wide. ¹⁴{Make} a curtain seven and a half meters long for one side {of the entrance}, with three posts and bases. ¹⁵{Make} another curtain seven and a half meters long for the other side {of the entrance}, also with three posts and bases. ¹⁶{Make} a curtain from finely twined linen ten meters wide for the courtyard entrance. A skilled weaver must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn. {Hang it} from four posts, each one with a base under it. ¹⁷Make all the ends of posts around the courtyard have rounded silver ends. Make the clasps from silver, and the bases from bronze. ¹⁸Make the whole courtyard, {from the east entrance to the west end}, 50 meters long and 25 meters wide, and {the curtains that enclose it} two and a half meters high. Make all the curtains from fine linen, and all the bases {under the posts} from bronze. ¹⁹Make all the things {that are not made of gold} that are for use inside the sacred tent {and in the courtyard}, and all the tent pegs to support the sacred tent and the curtains that form the courtyard from bronze.

²⁰Command the Israelites to bring you purified oil squeezed from olives, so that the lamp is always burning. ²¹In the outer part of the sacred tent, outside the curtain where the sacred chest is, Aaron and his sons must take care to keep the lamps burning every night from evening to morning for Yahweh. The Israelites must obey this regulation throughout all future generations.

Chapter 28

¹Have your older brother Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, come close to you and away from the Israelites, so they can be my priests. ²Make holy vestments for your brother Aaron, so {he reflects my} honor and beauty. ³Talk to all the skilled artisans, those whom I have made excellent at crafting things. Tell them to make vestments for Aaron to wear when you dedicate him to become a priest to serve me. ⁴They should make these vestments: a sacred pouch {for Aaron to wear over his breast}, a sacred apron, a robe, an embroidered tunic, a turban, and a waistband. They must make these holy vestments so that your older brother Aaron and his sons can {wear them as they} serve me by doing the work that priests do. ⁵The skilled workmen should receive fine linen and gold, blue, purple, and red thread {to make the vestments}.

⁶The skilled workmen must make the sacred apron from finely twisted linen. They must skillfully embroider it with blue, purple, and red thread, and with {fine} gold {thread}. ⁷It must have two shoulder straps attached on both edges to connect it together. ⁸Make a carefully woven belt that matches the sacred apron. Make it from the same piece of cloth as the apron. (That cloth was finely twisted linen with {skillfully embroidered} blue, purple, red thread, and {fine} gold {thread}.) Sew it onto the apron.

⁹Take two onyx stones and carve Jacob's {12} sons' names on them. ¹⁰{Carve the names} in the order in which Jacob's sons were born. {Carve} six names on one stone and the other six names on the other stone. ¹¹A gem cutter should carve these names in the two stones like he is making a signet ring. Then he should mount the stones in decorative gold settings. ¹²Fasten the memorial stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. Then Aaron will memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel by carrying them on his shoulders whenever he serves Yahweh. ¹³Make the decorative settings for the stones from gold. ¹⁴Make two chains of purified gold by braiding gold like cords and fasten the cord chains to the decorative settings.

¹⁵Make a sacred pouch for decision-making. Make it of the same materials as the sacred apron, and skillfully embroider it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red finely twisted linen. ¹⁶Fold the material double so that it is a square 23 centimeters long and 23 centimeters wide. ¹⁷Fasten four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a green emerald. ¹⁸Put a green turquoise, a blue sapphire, and a clear diamond in the second row. ¹⁹Put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst in the third row. ²⁰Put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper in the fourth row. Mount all these stones in decorative gold settings. ²¹{A gem cutter should carve} the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob into each of these stones like he is making signet rings. These name-stones will represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

²²Attach two chains that they made from purified gold and braided like cords to the sacred pouch. ²³Make two gold rings for the sacred pouch and attach them to the pouch's {upper} corners. ²⁴Fasten one end of each gold cord to one of the rings on the top corner of the pouch. ²⁵Fasten the other end of each cord to the two decorative settings that enclose the stones. Then put those on the front side of the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. ²⁶Make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron. ²⁷Make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near where the shoulder straps join the sacred apron just above the sash. ²⁸Tie the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord so that the sacred pouch is above the sash and does not come loose from the sacred apron.

²⁹Therefore, whenever he enters the Holy Place where Yahweh is, Aaron will continually memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel by carrying them close to his chest, in the sacred pouch for making decisions. ³⁰Put the

{things called} Urim and Thummim into the sacred pouch that he uses to know how I judged. In that way, they will be close to his chest when Aaron comes to talk to me. Aaron must always wear the items that reveal how I judge the Israelites on his chest when he meets with me.

³¹Make the robe {that Aaron will wear underneath his} sacred apron from only blue material. ³²Make an opening in the middle through which the priest can put his head. Weave a reinforced border around this opening to keep the collar from tearing. ³³All around the lower edge on the robe, fasten {decorations that look like} pomegranate fruit. Make them from blue, purple, and red yarn. Also {hang} gold bells in between the pomegranates. ³⁴{So the pattern will be} one gold bell and then one pomegranate {and then repeat} all the way around the bottom of the robe. ³⁵Whenever Aaron enters or leaves my presence in the Holy Place in the sacred tent for his priestly ministry, he must wear the robe. I will hear the bells, and he will not die.

³⁶Make a decoration from purified gold and carve into it the words, 'Dedicated to Yahweh,' just like carving a signet ring. ³⁷Fasten this ornament to the front of the turban by a blue cord. ³⁸Aaron must always wear the turban on his forehead so that I will accept the things that the Israelites dedicate to me. If there is anything wrong with anything they dedicate to me, Aaron will be guilty instead of the people.

³⁹Weave the long-sleeved tunic from fine linen. Also make the turban from fine linen. A skilled weaver must make the waistband. ⁴⁰Make long-sleeved tunics, waistbands, and caps for Aaron's sons so {they reflect my} honor and beauty. ⁴¹Put these clothes on your older brother Aaron and on his sons. Then consecrate them and authorize them to be my priests by anointing them {with olive oil}.

⁴²Make linen undershorts for them. The undershorts should extend from their waists to their thighs in order that no one can see their genitalia. ⁴³Aaron and his sons must always wear those undershorts when they enter the sacred tent or when they come near to the altar to offer sacrifices in the Holy Place. In this way, they will not be guilty, and they will not die.

Aaron and all his male descendants must obey this rule forever.

Chapter 29

¹Do the following things to dedicate Aaron and his sons to serve me by being priests. Select one young bull and two rams that do not have any defects. ²Also, using finely ground wheat flour, bake these all without yeast: {plain} bread, soft bread with olive oil in it, and thin wafers with oil on the outside. ³Put them in a basket. Bring the basket with the bread in it, the young bull, and the two rams {to me}. ⁴Take Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and wash them with water. ⁵Then put the vestments on Aaron—the long-sleeved tunic, the robe under the sacred apron, the sacred apron, and the sacred pouch. Tie the sacred apron onto him with its sash. ⁶Put the turban on his head, and fasten to the turban the sacred ornament {that has the words 'Dedicated to Yahweh' engraved on it}. ⁷Then take the anointing oil and pour some on his head to dedicate him. ⁸Then bring his sons and put the long-sleeved tunics on them. ⁹Tie the sashes around Aaron and his sons' waists and secure the caps on their heads. This is an eternal law: they are the priests. You will authorize them for this.

¹⁰Then bring the young bull to the front of the sacred tent. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on the head of the young bull, ¹¹sacrifice the young bull {by slitting its throat} before Yahweh {outside} the entrance to the sacred tent {and catch the blood in a bowl}. ¹²Take some of that blood with your finger and smear it on the projections of the altar. Pour the rest of the blood at the bottom of the altar. ¹³Take all the fat that covers the inner organs of the young bull, the fatty covering of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them. Burn all these on the altar until they are completely gone. ¹⁴But you must burn the meat of the young bull and its hide and intestines on a fire outside the camp. {Sacrificing} the bull purifies {the altar}.

¹⁵Select one of the rams. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head, ¹⁶kill the ram {by slitting its throat}. Catch the blood and sprinkle it all over the altar. ¹⁷Then cut the ram into pieces. Wash its inner organs and its legs,

and put those with the head and the rest of the body parts ¹⁸on the altar. Then completely burn it all. That will be a burnt offering to me, Yahweh, and the fire's smell will please me.

¹⁹Take the other ram. While Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head, ²⁰kill the ram {by slitting its throat}. Catch the blood. Smear some of the blood on the bottom portion of Aaron's and his sons' right ears, on their right thumbs, and on the big toes on their right feet. Throw the rest of the blood against the four sides of the altar.

²¹Wipe up some of the blood that is on the altar, mix it with some of the oil for anointing, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his clothes, and on his sons and their clothes. By doing this, you will dedicate them and their clothes to me.

²²Also, cut off the ram's fat: its fat tail, and the fat that covers the inner organs, the fatty covering of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This ram is for making holy {Aaron and his sons, who will be my priests}.) ²³Finally, from the basket of bread that they baked without yeast (the one that you brought to me), take a {plain} round loaf, a piece of soft bread with oil in it, and a thin wafer {with oil on the outside}. ²⁴Put all these things into the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then tell them to lift them up high to dedicate them to me. ²⁵Then take them from their hands and completely burn them on the altar, on top of the burnt offering. That also will be a fire offering to me, and its smell will please me. ²⁶Then take the breast of the ram for making Aaron holy and lift it up high to dedicate it to me. But then this part of the animal will be for you to eat. ²⁷Set these apart from the ram for making holy {Aaron and his sons as my priests}: the breast that you lifted high to dedicate to me and the thigh that you presented to me. These are for Aaron and his sons. ²⁸This custom will continue forever. Whenever the Israelites bring offerings to show they are friends with me, the breast and the thigh of animals that they present to me will be for Aaron and his male descendants to eat.

²⁹After Aaron {dies}, the sacred vestments that he wore will belong to his male descendants. They will wear them when {a leader} anoints them to authorize them to be priests. ³⁰Aaron's descendant who becomes high priest after him and enters the sacred tent and performs rituals in the Holy Place must wear these vestments for seven days.

³¹Take the breast and thigh of the ram that they sacrificed to make Aaron and his sons holy, and boil it in a location set aside for that. ³²{After it is cooked,} Aaron and his sons must eat the meat, along with the bread that is left in the basket, at the entrance to the sacred tent. ³³They will eat these things from the offering that made them holy by covering their sins when they became priests. But no one else can eat these things, because they are reserved for the priests. ³⁴If any of the holy meat or bread is left over in the morning, you must completely burn it. Do not eat any of it, because it is sacred.

³⁵Do all this to Aaron and his sons just as I have told you. You will prepare them for seven days. ³⁶Sacrifice a {young} bull to purify {the altar} each of those days. That will ceremonially cleanse the altar by covering the altar's imperfections. You must also pour {olive oil} over the altar to dedicate it {to Yahweh}. ³⁷After you cover the altar for seven days you will have made it holy. It will be so very holy that it will make anything that touches it holy too.

³⁸You must also perpetually sacrifice two one-year-old lambs per day on the altar. ³⁹You must sacrifice one lamb in the morning and the other around twilight. ⁴⁰With the first lamb, also {offer} two liters of finely ground wheat flour mixed with a liter of the best kind of olive oil, and one liter of wine as a drink-offering. ⁴¹In the evening, when you sacrifice the other lamb, offer the same amounts of flour, olive oil, and wine as you did in the morning. This will be an offering to me, Yahweh, that they will burn, and its smell will please me.

⁴²You and your descendants must continue making these offerings to me, Yahweh, throughout all future generations. You must offer them at the entrance to the sacred tent. That is where I will meet with you and speak to you. ⁴³That is where I will meet with the Israelites, and the brilliant light of my presence will cause that place to be holy. ⁴⁴I will dedicate the sacred tent and the altar. I will also dedicate Aaron and his sons to be my priests. ⁴⁵I will live with the Israelites, and I will be their God. ⁴⁶They will know that I, Yahweh their God, am the one who brought them out of Egypt in order that I might live among them. I am Yahweh, the God whom they worship.

Chapter 30

¹Make an altar from acacia wood for burning incense. ²It is to be square, one-half meter on each side. It is to be one meter high. Make {projections that look like} horns on the same block of wood as the altar. ³Cover the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. Put a gold molding all around it. ⁴Make two gold rings and attach them to the altar below the molding, one on each side of the altar. These rings are to hold the poles for carrying the altar. ⁵Make these two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. ⁶Put this incense altar outside the curtain that hangs in front of the sacred chest. (The chest that has a lid covering the stone slabs, where I will talk with you.)

⁷Aaron must burn sweet-smelling incense on this altar. He must burn some every morning when he takes care of the lamps, ⁸and he must burn some in the evening when he lights the lamps. Always keep incense burning for me throughout all future generations. ⁹Do not burn on the altar any incense that I have not told you to burn, or burn any animal on it, or any flour offering for me, nor pour any wine on it as an offering. ¹⁰Once a year, Aaron must take the purifying blood from the annual sacrifice that covers up the bad things people do and put it on the projections on the altar to cover the altar's flaws. {Each high priest} will cover the altar's flaws{this way} throughout all future generations. The altar will be very holy, dedicated to me, Yahweh."

¹¹Yahweh said to Moses, ¹²"Whenever {your leaders} count to find out how many Israelites there are, each man who {they} count must pay a price to me to save his life. This is so I do not cause the people to become sick and die when {the leaders} count them. ¹³When a man walks by a leader so he can count him he must pay {silver} that weighs half of a standard weight. (Use the official tabernacle weight standard, which is about 11 grams.) This half-weight {of silver} is an offering to me, Yahweh. ¹⁴Every man who is at least 20 years old must pay this amount to me, Yahweh, when he walks by a leader so the leader can count him. ¹⁵Rich men must not pay more than this amount, and poor men must not pay less than this amount when they pay this money to me, Yahweh, to save their lives. ¹⁶Take the life-saving money from the Israelites and use it for work on the sacred tent. It will remind me, Yahweh, that the Israelites have paid money to save their lives."

¹⁷Yahweh said to Moses, ¹⁸"Make a bronze washbasin and a bronze base for it. Put it between the sacred tent and the altar and fill it with water. ¹⁹Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and their feet in the basin. ²⁰They must wash with water before they enter the sacred tent so they will not die. Before they come to the altar to burn offerings as sacrifices to me, Yahweh, ²¹they must wash their hands and their feet so that they will not die. This will be a ritual for them and every generation of men descended from Aaron for all time."

²²Yahweh said to Moses, ²³"Collect to yourself some of the finest spices—six kilograms of liquid myrrh, and then half that much: three kilograms of sweet-smelling cinnamon, three kilograms of a sweet-smelling cane, ²⁴and six kilograms of cassia. {Weigh everything} according to the tabernacle standard. Also, {collect} four liters of olive oil. ²⁵Make a sacred oil for anointing with these ingredients. A perfume mixer must mix this mixed perfume. It will be a sacred oil for anointing. ²⁶Use this oil to anoint the sacred tent, the sacred chest, ²⁷the table and all the things that the priests use with it, the lampstand and all the things that the priests use to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, ²⁸and the altar for burning sacrifices, and all the things that the priests use with it, and the washbasin and its base. ²⁹{In that way,} you will dedicate those items to me. They will be so very holy that they will make anything that touches them holy too.

³⁰Dedicate Aaron and his sons to be my priests by anointing them. ³¹Tell the Israelites, 'This oil will be my sacred oil for anointing throughout all future generations. ³²You must not pour it on the bodies of people {who are not priests}, and you must not make other oil to be like it by mixing those same things. This oil is reserved for me, and you must consider it sacred. ³³You must drive out from Israel anyone who makes a perfume like this or who puts it on anyone who is not a priest."

³⁴Yahweh also said to Moses, "Collect equal parts of several sweet spices: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. ³⁵A perfume mixer must mix these, along with salt, into a perfumed incense. It will be clean and

sacred. ³⁶Beat some of it into a fine powder. Then take some of it into the sacred tent and set it in front of the sacred chest where I meet you. You all must consider this incense to be very sacred. ³⁷The people must not mix the same spices to make this incense for themselves. They must consider this incense sacred, only for me, Yahweh. ³⁸You must drive out from Israel anyone who makes a perfume like this."

Chapter 31

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Pay attention. I have chosen a man named Bezalel, son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe descended from Judah. ³I will cause my spirit to teach him to know how to make all kinds of fine goods wisely and intelligently. ⁴He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. ⁵He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other skilled work. ⁶Pay attention! I have also appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, to work with him. I have also given special ability to other skilled men in order that they can make all the things that I have commanded you to make. ⁷Those things include: The sacred tent; the sacred chest with its lid on top of it; all the other things that will be inside the sacred tent, ⁸the table and all the things that the priests use with it, the pure {gold} lampstand and all the things that the priests use to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, ⁹the altar for burning sacrifices and all the things the priests use with it, and the washbasin with its base; ¹⁰the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests; ¹¹the oil for anointing, and the sweet-smelling incense for the Holy Place. The craftsmen must make all these things exactly as I have told you that they should do."

¹²Yahweh said to Moses, ¹³"Tell the Israelites, 'Constantly obey {my instructions regarding} the Sabbath days {for rest}. Those days will remind me and you and your descendants, throughout all future generations, that I, Yahweh, have dedicated you {to be my people}. ¹⁴You must obey my rules about the Sabbath days for rest, because you must regard them as dedicated to me. You must kill people who disrespect these days by working on them. You must remove them from Israel. ¹⁵You may work for six days {each week}, but the seventh day {of each week} is a solemn Sabbath-rest day, dedicated to me, Yahweh. You must execute anyone who does any work on a Sabbath day {of rest}. ¹⁶The Israelites must respect the Sabbath {days of rest}, and rest on them throughout all future generations. This agreement never ends ¹⁷between me and the Israelites. It will remind you forever that I, Yahweh, created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day I stopped doing that work and recuperated."

¹⁸When Yahweh finished talking with Moses on the top of Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone slabs on which he had engraved his commandments with his own fingers.

Chapter 32

¹Moses stayed on top of the mountain for a long time. When the people saw that he was not returning, they went to Aaron and said to him, "Get up and make us gods who will lead us on our journey. We do not know what happened to that man Moses, who brought us here out of Egypt."

²Aaron replied, "Take your wives' and your children's gold earrings from them, and bring them to me." ³So the people took off all their own gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴After he received the gold, he {melted it in a fire.} He molded the softened gold and made {a statue that looked like} a young bull. The people {saw it and} said, "This is the Israelite god who rescued us from Egypt!"

⁵When Aaron saw {how the people reacted}, he built an altar in front of the bull. Then he announced, "Tomorrow we will have a celebration to {honor} Yahweh!" ⁶So early the next morning the people {killed animals} and burnt them as sacrifices on the altar. They also brought sacrifices to restore fellowship with others. Then they sat down to eat and to drink {wine}. Then they got up and partied.

⁷Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down from the mountain, because your people, the ones that you brought up here from Egypt, are acting perversely! ⁸They have already stopped obeying my commands about how to live. From

melted gold, they have made a statue {that looks like} a young bull. They have worshiped it and offered sacrifices to it. They are saying, 'This is the Israelite god who rescued us from Egypt!'" ⁹Then Yahweh said to Moses, "I have been observing these people. Look at how obstinate they are. ¹⁰Because of this, I am very angry with them, so I am going to destroy them. Do not try to stop me! Then I will cause you {and your descendants} to become a great nation."

¹¹But Moses pleaded with his God, Yahweh, and said, "Yahweh, please do not be angry with your people. These are the people whom you saved from Egypt with great power and mighty works! ¹²{If you destroy them} the Egyptians will say that you had a wicked plan. {They will say} you led the Israelites out to the mountains to kill them and to remove them entirely from the earth. Stop being angry and relent from punishing your people. ¹³Recall your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You solemnly promised them, 'I will enable you to have as many descendants as the stars that are in the sky. I will give those descendants all this land that I am talking about. It will be their land forever.'" ¹⁴So Yahweh relented. He did not punish his people as he had said he would do.

¹⁵Then Moses turned around and went down the mountain. He was carrying in his hands the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had inscribed his commandments. He had inscribed on both sides of the slabs, both front and back. ¹⁶As for the slabs, God had made them. As for the inscription, God had inscribed it. He had engraved on the slabs.

¹⁷Joshua heard the sound of the people shouting. So he said to Moses, "There is a noise in the camp that sounds like the noise of a battle!"

¹⁸But Moses said,

"That is not a victory shout;

or a defeated cry.

I hear singing!"

¹⁹As soon as Moses came close to the camp and saw the statue of the bull and the people dancing, he became very angry. He flung the stone slabs down {onto the ground} at the base of the mountain, and they broke completely.

²⁰Then he took the statue of the bull that they had made and melted it in the fire. {When it cooled,} he ground it into fine powder. Then he threw the powder on top of the water and forced the Israelites to drink it.

²¹Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you that you caused them to sin so much?"

²²Aaron replied, "Please do not be angry with me, my lord. You know how likely these people are to do wicked things. ²³They said to me, 'Make us a god to lead us because we do not know what has happened to that Moses guy who brought us out of Egypt!' ²⁴So I said to them, 'Everyone who is wearing {pieces of} gold {jewelry} should take them off.' So they {took them off and} gave them to me. I threw them into the fire, and out came this statue of a young bull!"

²⁵Moses saw that Aaron had allowed the people to act wildly, so that their enemies would laugh at them. ²⁶So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "Everyone who is loyal to Yahweh, come close to me!" All the men in the tribe of Levi gathered around him. ²⁷Then he said to them, "Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, commands that every one of you should fasten your sword to your side, and then go through the camp from this entrance to the other one and back again. Each one of you must kill the {unfaithful} men, {even if} they are your brother, your friend, or your neighbor." ²⁸The men in the tribe of Levi did what Moses told them to do. They killed 3, 000 Israelite men that day. ²⁹Moses said {to the men in the tribe of Levi}, "Because each of you {killed} even your own son and brother, Yahweh has consecrated and blessed you today."

³⁰The next day, Moses said to the people, "You have sinned very greatly. But I will now climb up the mountain {again} to {talk with} Yahweh. Perhaps I can {persuade him to} forgive you for sinning {like this}." ³¹So Moses went back up {the mountain} and said to Yahweh, "These people sinned very greatly when they made for themselves a

gold idol {and worshiped it}! Please, ³²if you would, forgive them for their sin now. But if you will not forgive them, please erase my name from the book in which you have written {your people's names}."

³³But Yahweh said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will erase their names from that book. ³⁴Now, go lead the Israelites to the place I told you about! Watch for my angel going in front of you. However, sometime I will come and I will punish them for how they sinned."

³⁵Later Yahweh caused the people to become sick because they had made Aaron make the bull idol.

Chapter 33

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Get up and go from here with the people whom you led out of Egypt. Go to the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give to their descendants. ²I will send my angel ahead of you, and I will remove the people descended from Canaan, Amor, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus from that land. ³You will go to a land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops. But I will not go with you myself, because if I did that, I might annihilate you while you are traveling, because you are very obstinate people."

⁴⁻⁵Yahweh told Moses to tell the Israelites, "You are very stubborn. If I were to go with you for even a moment, I would kill you. Now take off your fine things {to show that you are sorry for sinning}. Then I will decide if I will punish you." When the people heard that Yahweh spoke harshly, they were sorry, and no one wore fancy things.

⁶From Mount Sinai on, the Israelites took off and left off all their fine things.

⁷{Until they built the sacred tent,} Moses set up a tent outside the camp, far away. He called it "the tent of meeting." Everyone who wanted Yahweh to decide something for them would go out of the camp to the tent of meeting. ⁸Whenever Moses went out to the tent of meeting, all the people would stand at their own tent entrances and watch him until he had walked into the tent of meeting. ⁹Whenever Moses went into the tent of meeting, the tall cloud would come down and stay at the tent entrance, and then {Yahweh} would talk with Moses. ¹⁰When the people saw the tall cloud standing at the entrance to the tent of meeting, they would all bow to worship Yahweh at their own tent entrances. ¹¹Yahweh would speak directly to Moses like someone speaks to his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp. But his young helper, Joshua son of Nun, would stay in the tent of meeting.

¹²Moses said to Yahweh, "Please pay attention. You told me to lead the Israelites {to the land that you will show me}. But you have not told me whom you will send {to help} me! You also said that you know me well and that you are pleased with me. ¹³So now, if you are truly pleased with me, I ask you, please tell me the things that you are going to do in order that I may know you better and continue to please you. Please remember that the Israelites are the people whom you chose to belong to you."

¹⁴Yahweh replied, "I will go with you and relieve you."

¹⁵Moses replied to Yahweh, "If you do not go {with me}, do not make us leave this place. ¹⁶The only way that others will know that you are pleased with me and with your people is if you go with us! If you go with us, it will show that we are different from all the other nations on the earth."

¹⁷Yahweh replied to Moses, "I will do what you have asked, because I know you well and I am pleased with you."

¹⁸Then Moses said, "Please let me see how glorious you are."

¹⁹Yahweh replied, "I will display to you how good I am and tell you {what} my name Yahweh {means}. I will act kindly to anyone I choose, and I will act mercifully to anyone I choose. ²⁰But you cannot see my face, because anyone who sees my face will die. ²¹But look! Here is a place close to me where you can stand on a large rock.

²²When my glorious {light} goes by you, I will put you in a large hole in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have gone by you. ²³Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back, but you will not see my face."

Chapter 34

¹Yahweh kept talking to Moses, "Cut two slabs of stone like the first slabs, the ones that you smashed. Then I will write the same thing on them as was on the first slabs. ²Get ready tomorrow morning, and come up and stand before me at the top of Mount Sinai. ³Do not allow anyone to come up with you. I do not want anyone else to be anywhere on the mountain. Do not even allow any sheep or cattle to eat grass near the mountain." ⁴So Moses cut two slabs of stone like the first ones. He rose early the next morning, picked up the slabs, and carried them in his hands up to the top of Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had told him.

⁵Then Yahweh came down in the tall cloud and stood there with Moses. Then Yahweh called out his name, "Yahweh." ⁶Yahweh passed in front of him and called out, "I am Yahweh God. I always act mercifully and kindly toward people, and I do not get angry quickly. I abundantly love and faithfully do what I promise for my people. ⁷I abundantly love people for thousands of generations. I forgive people for doing wrong, transgressing, and sinning. But I will certainly punish the guilty. If people do wrong, I cause that to affect their descendants, down to the third and fourth generation."

⁸Quickly Moses bowed low down on the ground and worshiped Yahweh. ⁹He said, "My Lord, if you are now pleased with me, I ask that you go with us. These people are very stubborn, but forgive us for all our sins, and accept us as the people who belong to you forever."

¹⁰Yahweh replied, "Pay attention! I am going to remind you of what I agreed with the Israelites. {As for me,} I will perform great miracles. These will be miracles that no one has ever done on the earth in any people group. Every nation around them will see the great things that I, Yahweh, will do. I will do things for you all that will make everyone revere me. ¹¹Obey what I am about to command you today. I will surely force the Amor, Canaan, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus people groups to leave the land for you.

¹²Be careful that you do not agree to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land into which you are going. If you do that, {you will begin to do the evil things that they do.} It will be like falling into a trap. ¹³Rather, you must tear down their altars, destroy their idols, and cut down the poles that they use to worship Asherah.

¹⁴{Do that} because you must not worship any other god, because I, Yahweh, am passionate for people to recognize that I am the only true God, like a husband is passionate for his wife to love only him. ¹⁵{Again,} do not agree to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land, because when they worship their gods and offer sacrifices to them, they will invite you to join them. Then you will {be unfaithful to me and sin by} eating the food that they sacrifice to their gods. ¹⁶Then you will {sin by} having some of their women to be wives for your sons. These women will worship their own gods. They will also make your sons be unfaithful to me by worshiping those gods.

¹⁷Do not make your own gods by pouring melted metal into statue molds.

¹⁸Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread the way that I commanded you: eat unleavened bread for seven days in the month called Aviv. I set this time because Aviv is the month when you left Egypt.

¹⁹All your firstborn sons belong to me. All the firstborn males of your domesticated animals, cows, sheep, and goats, belong to me. ²⁰In the case of a firstborn donkey, you must buy it back by killing a lamb instead of it. If you do not buy it back, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. You must buy back every one of your firstborn sons. Do not come to worship me without bringing an offering.

²¹Work six days {each week}, but on the seventh day you must rest. Even during the times when you are plowing the ground or harvesting your crops, you must rest on the seventh day.

²²{In the spring,} when you begin to harvest the first wheat crop, have the Celebration of Weeks, and at the end of the year have the Finished Harvest Celebration. ²³Three times every year, all the men must gather together to worship me, the Lord Yahweh, the Israelite's God. ²⁴Surely, I will force the people groups to leave the land you are

going to, and I will make your territory larger. No one will want {to try to conquer} your country while the men come to worship Yahweh your God for these three festivals each year.

²⁵Do not sacrifice bread you made with yeast along with blood from an animal sacrifice. Do not keep until the next morning any part of the animals you sacrificed at the Passover celebration.

²⁶{Each year, when you harvest your crops,} take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh your God.

{When you kill} a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk."

²⁷Yahweh said to Moses, "Write down the words that I have told you. By giving you these commands, I have made an agreement with you and with the Israelites." ²⁸Moses was there {on the top of the mountain} with Yahweh for 40 days and nights. During that time he did not eat or drink anything. He engraved on the stone slabs the words of the Ten Commandments which were part of Yahweh's solemn agreement.

²⁹When Moses came back down from Mount Sinai he was carrying the two stone slabs on which he had written the Ten Commandments. His face was very bright from talking to Yahweh, but he did not know it. ³⁰When Aaron and the Israelites saw Moses, they were amazed that his face was bright, and were afraid to approach him. ³¹But Moses summoned them, and Aaron and the other Israelite leaders came back to him, and he talked with them.

³²Afterwards, all the Israelites came near, and Moses told them all that Yahweh had commanded him on Mount Sinai. ³³When Moses finished talking to the people, he covered his face with a thin cloth.

³⁴Whenever Moses entered the tent of meeting to talk with Yahweh, he would remove the cloth. When he came back out, he would always tell the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him to tell them. ³⁵The Israelites would see that Moses' face was still bright. Then he would put the cloth on his face again until the next time that he went to talk with Yahweh.

Chapter 35

¹Moses gathered all the Israelites together and said to them, "This is what Yahweh has commanded you to do.

²{Each week} you may work for six days, but on the seventh day, you must rest. It is a sacred day for you, dedicated to Yahweh. You must execute anyone who does any work on the seventh day. ³Do not light a fire in your homes on the rest days."

⁴Moses also said to all the gathered Israelites, "This is what Yahweh has commanded: ⁵Everyone who wants to should bring Yahweh a gift. They should bring these sorts of gifts to Yahweh: gold, silver, or bronze, ⁶{cloth dyed} blue, {cloth dyed} purple, {cloth dyed} bright red, fine linen, {cloth made from} goats' hair, ⁷red ram skins, fine leather hides, hard wood from acacia trees, ⁸{olive} oil to burn in the lamps, spices to put in the {olive} oil for anointing {the priests}, and spices to put in the sweet-smelling incense, ⁹onyx stones and other expensive stones to fasten to the priest's sacred apron and to put on the chest pouch that is on the apron.

¹⁰All the skilled workmen among you should come and make all the things that Yahweh has commanded {you to make}: ¹¹the sacred tent with the inner tent; its covering, fasteners, frames, crossbars, posts, and bases; ¹²the sacred chest with its poles and its lid, the curtain that will separate the Holy Place from the Very Holy Place, ¹³the table with the poles for carrying it and all its utensils, the sacred bread to present before God, ¹⁴the lampstand for making light with its implements and lamps, the oil {to burn} for light, ¹⁵the altar for {burning} incense and the poles {for carrying the altar}, the oil for anointing and the sweet-smelling incense, the curtain for the entrance of the sacred tent, ¹⁶the altar for burning sacrifices and its bronze grating, the poles {for carrying the altar}, and all its implements, the washbasin and its base, ¹⁷the curtains to surround the courtyard and the posts and bases {for the posts to support the curtains}; the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; ¹⁸the pegs and ropes for the sacred

tent and its courtyard, ¹⁹the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests in the Holy Place.”

²⁰Then all the Israelites left from where they had gathered {to listen} to Moses. ²¹Everyone who wished to bring a gift to Yahweh did so. They brought things to make the sacred tent, all the other items for rituals, and the sacred vestments for the priests. ²²All the men and women who wished to brought necklaces, earrings, rings, gold ornaments—all sorts of things made from gold. Then they lifted them up high to dedicate them to Yahweh. ²³Many people who had blue, purple, or bright red {cloth}, or fine linen, or {cloth made from} goats’ hair, or red rams’ skins, or fine leather hides brought some of these things. ²⁴Everyone who {desired to} offer silver or bronze gifts brought them to Yahweh. Anyone owning wood from acacia trees brought it for any part of the building work. ²⁵All the women who were skilled {at making cloth} brought blue, purple, or red woolen yarn and fine linen thread that they had made by hand-spinning. ²⁶All the skilled women who wanted to made {thread} from goats’ hair by spinning. ²⁷The leaders brought onyx stones and other fine stones for fastening to {Aaron’s} sacred apron and sacred pouch, ²⁸and spices and oil to use for the lamps, anointing oil, and sweet-smelling incense. ²⁹All the Israelite men and women who wanted to bring these things freely offered them to Yahweh for doing the work that he had commanded Moses tell them to do.

³⁰Moses said to the Israelites, “Listen carefully. Yahweh has chosen a man named Bezalel, son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe descended from Judah. ³¹Yahweh has caused his Spirit to teach him to know how to make all kinds of fine goods wisely and intelligently. ³²He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. ³³He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other inventive, skilled work. ³⁴Yahweh has also made Bezalel and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan, able to teach {others what they do}. ³⁵He has enabled them to skillfully do all kinds of crafts-work—those who create artistic things, those who embroider designs using blue, purple, or red woolen yarn with linen cloth, and those who make the cloth. They are able to plan and do many kinds of artistic work.

Chapter 36

¹Bezalel and Oholiab will do this work along with all the other skillful people. Yahweh has made them skillful and able to know how to follow his instructions to build the sacred place.”

²So Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and all the other people that Yahweh had made skillful who wished to come do some of the work. ³They took all the gifts for building the sacred tent from Moses that the Israelites had brought to him. But the Israelites continued gladly bringing more gifts every morning. ⁴As a result, each and every skillful craftsman who was working to make the sacred tent left their work and came to Moses. ⁵The craftsmen told him, “The Israelites are bringing many times more than we need to build as Yahweh has commanded us!” ⁶So Moses told them to proclaim a message throughout the camp, “Everyone should stop making and bringing material gifts for the sacred tent!” So the people stopped bringing gifts. ⁷They had more than enough materials for all the work.

⁸All the most skilled men among the workmen made the sacred tent, using ten long strips of finely twisted linen. A skilled craftsman took blue, purple, and red thread, and embroidered these strips with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. ⁹Each strip was 14.5 meters long and two meters wide. They were all the same size. ¹⁰He sewed five strips together {as one set}, and sewed the other five strips together {as another set}. ¹¹For each set, he made loops of blue cloth and fastened them along the outer edge of the strip, at the end of each set. ¹²He put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops at the edge of the second set so that the loops were opposite each other. ¹³He made 50 gold fasteners and fastened both of the sets together with them to make the sacred tent one unit.

¹⁴He made a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats’ hair. ¹⁵Each of the 11 pieces of cloth was the same dimensions: 15 meters long and two meters wide. ¹⁶He sewed five of these pieces of cloth

together {to make one set}, and he sewed the other six pieces of cloth together {to make another set}. ¹⁷He made {100 loops of blue cloth,} and fastened 50 of them to the outer edge of a set and fastened 50 to the outer edge of the other set. ¹⁸He made 50 bronze clasps for connecting the tent into one big piece. ¹⁹He made another cover from red rams' skins to go over the tent, and a top cover from fine leather hides.

²⁰He made a standing framework from acacia wood for the sacred tent. ²¹Each frame was five meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. ²²He made two pegs {at the bottom of} each frame to fasten them together. He made each frame for the tabernacle this way. ²³He made 20 frames for the south side of the sacred tent. ²⁴He made 40 silver bases to go underneath the 20 frames. He put two bases under each frame and fit their two pegs into the bases. ²⁵For the other side—{that is,} the north side—of the sacred tent he made 20 frames ²⁶and 40 silver bases for them. {They put} two bases under each frame. ²⁷For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, he made six frames. ²⁸They made two frames for the rear corners of the sacred tent. ²⁹He matched them to each other at the bottom and top. He secured the tops together with a ring. He did this for both, making them the corner pieces. ³⁰He made eight frames and 16 silver bases, two bases under each frame.

³¹He made crossbars from acacia wood. He made five crossbars for the frames on the {north} side of the sacred tent, ³²five crossbars for the frames on the {south} side of the sacred tent, and five crossbars for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, on the west. ³³He made the center crossbar, right in the middle of the frames, reach all the way from edge to edge. ³⁴He covered the frames and crossbars with gold. He made the rings for fastening the crossbars to the frames from gold.

³⁵He made a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman embroidered it with blue, purple, and red yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the sacred chest. ³⁶He made four posts from acacia wood for the curtain. He covered them and their hooks with gold. He formed four silver bases for the posts. ³⁷He made a curtain as the tent entrance. A skilled weaver made it from fine linen with blue, purple, and red yarn. ³⁸{He also made} five posts with hooks on them. He covered the tops of the posts and their connectors with gold and {made} a bronze base for each of those posts.

Chapter 37

¹Then Bezalel made the sacred chest from acacia wood. He made it 125 centimeters long, 75 centimeters wide, and 75 centimeters high. ²He covered the chest with pure gold inside and outside and made a gold molding for all around it. ³He made four rings from gold and fastened them to the four legs of the chest. He put two of the rings on each side of the chest. ⁴He made two poles from acacia wood, and covered them with gold. ⁵He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that {the Levites} could carry it. ⁶He made a lid for the chest from pure gold. It was 125 centimeters long and 75 centimeters wide. ⁷He hammered {a large lump of} gold into the form of two creatures that have wings for the two ends of the lid. ⁸He made the winged creatures {from the gold} from each end of the sacred chest's lid, one at one end and the other at the other end. ⁹The creature's wings spread out and reached up to cover the lid. They faced each other, facing the chest's lid that was between them.

¹⁰He made a table from acacia wood. It was one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. ¹¹He covered the table with pure gold and put a gold molding all around it. ¹²He made a rim all around it, eight centimeters wide, and made a gold molding around the rim. ¹³He molded four rings from gold. He fastened them to the four corners of the table. Each ring was close to each table leg ¹⁴near the rim. They held poles for carrying the table. ¹⁵He made two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. They were for carrying the table. ¹⁶He made all the utensils for the table from pure gold—dishes, cups, bowls, and jars {for the priests to use} to pour out {wine to offer to Yahweh}. ¹⁷He made the lampstand from pure gold. He hammered {one large lump of gold} to make its base and its shaft. He made the cups, with the flower buds and petals {that decorate them}, from that same lump. ¹⁸There were six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. ¹⁹Each branch had three gold cups that looked like almond flowers on it. The flowers had buds and petals. It

was the same for all six branches of the lampstand. ²⁰On {the shaft of} the lampstand there were four cups that also looked like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. ²¹He made one flower bud beneath every two branches. He attached it to each pair of branches {as if they were growing} from it. He made all six lampstand branches like this. ²²He hammered all these buds and branches{, along with the shaft,} from one {large lump} of pure gold. ²³He made from pure gold: seven lamps, tongs {to remove the burned wicks}, and trays {in which to put the burned wicks}. ²⁴He used 33 kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays.

²⁵He made the altar for burning incense from acacia wood. It was square, one-half meter on each side and one meter high. There were {projections that looked like} horns on the same block of wood as the altar. ²⁶He covered the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. He put a gold molding all around it. ²⁷He made two gold rings and attached them to the altar below the molding, one on each side of the altar. These rings were to hold the poles for carrying the altar. ²⁸He made those two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. ²⁹He made the sacred oil for anointing and the pure sweet-smelling incense. A perfumer mixed the incense together.

Chapter 38

¹Bezalel made the altar for burning sacrifices from acacia wood. It was square, two and a half meters long on each side, and one and a half meters tall. ²He made a {projection that looks like a} horn on each of the top corners from the same block of wood as the altar. He covered the whole altar with bronze. ³He made all the implements for the altar: the pans, shovels, basins, forks for working with cooking meat, and buckets for carrying hot coals. He made all of these implements from bronze. ⁴He made a bronze lattice grating {to hold the wood and burning coals}. He put the grating under the rim {that was around the altar}. He made it so that it was inside the altar, halfway down. ⁵He molded four bronze rings in which to put the poles for the lattice and fastened them to its four corners. ⁶He made the poles from acacia wood and covered them with bronze. ⁷He put the poles for carrying the altar through the rings on each side of the altar. He made the altar from boards; it was hollow in the middle.

⁸He made the bronze washbasin and the bronze base for it. The bronze was from the mirrors that belonged to the women who worked at the entrance of the sacred tent.

⁹He made a courtyard {around the sacred tent}. On the south side, he hung a fine linen curtain 50 meters long ¹⁰from 20 {bronze} posts that had 20 bronze bases for the posts and hooks on them and silver connectors. ¹¹For the north side {of the courtyard}, he hung 50 meters of curtains from 20 posts, each with their bronze bases, hooks, and silver connectors. ¹²For the west side {of the courtyard}, he hung 25 meters of curtains from ten posts, each with their bases, hooks, and silver connectors. ¹³The east side also was 25 meters wide. ¹⁴{He made} a curtain seven and a half meters long for one side {of the entrance}, with three posts and bases. ¹⁵On the other side, opposite from the entrance to the courtyard, {he made} a curtain seven and a half meters long, also with three posts and bases. ¹⁶There were fine linen curtains all around the courtyard. ¹⁷All the posts' bases were bronze. They covered the tops with silver. The pillars' hooks and loops were silver. The ends of the courtyard's pillars had a rounded silver finish. ¹⁸For the entrance of the courtyard, {they made} a curtain from finely twined linen, and a skilled weaver embroidered it with blue, purple, and red yarn. The curtain was ten meters long and two and a half meters high, just like the other curtains around the courtyard. ¹⁹It had four posts, each with a bronze base. They covered the tops of the posts and their hooks with silver. The loops were silver. ²⁰They made all the tent pegs to hold the sacred tent and the curtains around the courtyard of bronze.

²¹This is a list of all the materials that the craftsmen used to make the sacred tent where the Ten Commandments were. Moses instructed some men from the tribe of Levi to write the list. Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest, supervised the men who wrote it. ²²Bezalel of the tribe of Judah, son of Uri and grandson of Hur made all the things that Yahweh had commanded Moses to make. ²³Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan worked with Bezalel. Oholiab was a skilled engraver who made artistic things. He embroidered designs using blue, purple, and red woolen yarn, and linen.

²⁴All the gold that they used to make the sacred tent weighed 965 kilograms. They used the official standard when they weighed the gold that the people dedicated to Yahweh. ²⁵All the silver that the people {contributed when the leaders took the} census weighed 3, 420 kilograms. They also used the official standard when they weighed the silver. ²⁶They had counted all the men who were at least twenty years old, and each man had paid a silver coin that weighed about five grams, according to the official standard. That was a total of 603, 550 men. ²⁷It took 3, 400 kilograms of silver to make the bases under the posts that supported the sacred tent's curtains. They used 34 kilograms for each of the 100 bases. ²⁸With the remaining the 20 kilograms of silver, they made the hooks for the posts, covered the tops of the posts, and made rounded corners. ²⁹The people had contributed about 2, 400 kilograms of bronze. ³⁰With the bronze he made the bases to support the posts at the entrance of the sacred tent, the altar {for burning sacrifices} with its grate and its tools, ³¹the bases {for the posts that supported the curtains} that surrounded the courtyard, the bases for the entrance to the courtyard, and the pegs for the sacred tent and for the curtains around the courtyard.

Chapter 39

¹Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other skilled workmen made the beautiful holy vestments for Aaron to wear while he served Yahweh as a priest in the Holy Place. They made them from blue, purple, and red woolen cloth, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²He made the sacred apron from finely twisted linen, blue, purple, and red thread, and with {fine} gold {wire}.

³They hammered some thin sheets of gold and cut them into thin strips that they embroidered into the fine linen and into the blue, purple, and red cloth. ⁴They made shoulder straps to attach the two sides of the ephod together.

⁵{They made} a carefully woven belt that matched the sacred apron. They made it from the same piece of cloth as the apron. (That cloth was finely twisted linen with {skillfully embroidered} blue, purple, red thread, and {fine} gold {thread}). {They sewed it} onto the apron, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ⁶They cut two onyx stones and mounted them in decorative gold settings. They engraved the names of the twelve sons of Jacob on the stones like someone engraves a signet ring. ⁷They fastened the stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron to memorialize the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

⁸He made the sacred pouch of the same materials as the sacred apron and skillfully embroidered it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red finely twisted linen. ⁹They folded the material double so that they made the pouch a double-folded square 23 centimeters long and 23 centimeters wide. ¹⁰They fastened four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, they put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a red garnet. ¹¹They put a green emerald, a blue sapphire, and a white diamond in the second row. ¹²They put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst in the third row. ¹³They put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper in the fourth row. They put tiny gold frames around each of the stones. ¹⁴{They carved} the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob into each of these stones like they were making signet rings. These name-stones represented the 12 tribes of Israel.

¹⁵They attached two chains that they made from purified gold and braided like cords to the sacred pouch. ¹⁶They made two decorative gold settings and two gold rings and attached them to the upper corners of the sacred pouch. ¹⁷They fastened one end of each gold cord to one of the rings on the top corner of the pouch. ¹⁸They fastened the other end of each cord to the two decorative settings that enclose the stones. Then they put those on the front side of the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. ¹⁹Then they made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron. ²⁰They made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near where the shoulder straps join with the sacred apron just above the sash. ²¹They tied the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord, so that the sacred pouch was above the sash and would not come loose from the sacred apron. They did these things exactly as Yahweh had instructed Moses to do.

²²Bezalel had a weaver make the robe {that Aaron would wear underneath his} sacred apron from only blue material. ²³It had an opening in the middle like other clothing. They made a border around this opening to prevent

the material from tearing. ²⁴At the lower edge of the robe they fastened decorations that resembled pomegranate fruit. They wove the decorations from blue, purple, and red woolen yarn. ²⁵They made bells from purified gold and fastened them between each of the decorative pomegranates all around the bottom of the robe. ²⁶So the pattern was bell, pomegranate, bell, pomegranate, and so on all around the bottom of the robe. {The robe was} for {Aaron to wear while he} worked as a priest, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²⁷For Aaron and his sons, a skilled weaver made long-sleeved tunics from fine linen, ²⁸the turban and the caps from fine linen, the undershorts from very finely twined linen, ²⁹and the sash from fine linen with blue, purple, and red woolen embroidery, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

³⁰They made a sacred ornamental decoration from purified gold and etched into it the words, 'Dedicated to Yahweh,' just like carving a signet ring. ³¹They attached a blue cord to this for fastening it to the top of the turban, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

³²{After this,} they had finished all the work on the sacred tent where they would meet with Yahweh. The Israelites had done everything in exactly the way that Yahweh had commanded Moses to have it done. ³³The craftsmen brought Moses the whole sacred tent structure: the tent and all its equipment, the fasteners, frames, crossbars, posts, bases, ³⁴the red rams' skin and fine leather hide coverings {for the sacred tent}, the curtain for hiding {the holiest place}, ³⁵the sacred chest, the poles, the chests' lid, ³⁶the table and all its utensils, the sacred bread to present before God, ³⁷the pure {gold} lampstand with all its lamps in a line, and its utensils, and the oil to burn for light, ³⁸the golden altar {for burning incense}, the oil for anointing, the sweet-smelling incense, the curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent, ³⁹the bronze altar and its bronze grating, the poles, and all its implements, the washbasin and its base, ⁴⁰the curtains to surround the courtyard and the posts and bases, the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard, the ropes and pegs and all the things for serving in the sacred tent where they would meet Yahweh, ⁴¹and the beautiful, sacred vestments for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests in the Holy Place. ⁴²The Israelites had done all the work in exactly the way that Yahweh had commanded Moses to have it done. ⁴³Then Moses examined everything they had made. Truly, they had done everything exactly as Yahweh had commanded them to do it. Then Moses blessed the workmen.

Chapter 40

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Set up the sacred tent where you will meet with me on the first day of the first month of the year. ³Put inside it the sacred chest containing the stone slabs with the Ten Commandments. Hide it by hanging its curtain in front of it. ⁴Bring the table into the sacred tent and neatly organize on it all the things that they made for it. Then bring in the lampstand and put the lamps up into it. ⁵Put the gold altar for burning incense in front of the sacred chest, and set up the curtain at the entrance of the sacred tent. ⁶Put the altar for burning sacrifices in front of the entrance to the sacred tent where you will meet with me. ⁷Put the washbasin between the sacred tent and the altar, and fill it with water. ⁸Hang the curtains around the outside to make the courtyard, and also hang up the courtyard's entrance curtain.

⁹Then take the oil for anointing and put it on the sacred tent and everything that is in it, to consecrate it all to me. Then it will be dedicated to me. ¹⁰Also put some of the oil on the altar on which the priests will burn the sacrifices and on all the things that they will use at the altar. This will consecrate the altar to me. Then it will be sacred, dedicated to me. ¹¹Also put some of the oil on the washbasin and its base, to consecrate them to me.

¹²Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and wash them with water. ¹³Then set Aaron apart for serving me as a priest by putting his sacred vestments on him and by pouring oil on him. ¹⁴Also bring Aaron's sons and put their special tunics on them, ¹⁵then pour oil on them just as you did on their father. This will consecrate them to serve me as priests. By pouring oil on them, you will cause them and their descendants to be priests throughout all their future generations."

¹⁶Moses did all these things exactly as Yahweh had commanded him to do.

¹⁷On the first day of the first month of Israel's second year, the people set up the sacred tent. ¹⁸Moses set up the sacred tent, and its bases, frames, crossbars, and posts. ¹⁹He spread out the two layers of coverings over the sacred tent, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ²⁰Then Moses took the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had written his commandments and put them into the sacred chest. He put the carrying poles into the rings on the chest and put the lid on top of it. ²¹Then Moses took the chest into {the Holy Place inside} the sacred tent. He hung the thick curtain to conceal the chest containing the commandments, exactly as Yahweh had commanded him. ²²He set the table inside the sacred tent, on its north side, outside the curtain {that hid the sacred chest}. ²³He laid out the bread neatly on the table to display it before Yahweh, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do. ²⁴He set the lampstand inside the sacred tent, on the south side, on the opposite side from the table. ²⁵Then he set the lamps on the lampstand in Yahweh's presence, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ²⁶He set the gold altar {for burning incense} inside the sacred tent, in front of the curtain {that hid the Most Holy Place}. ²⁷He burned some sweet-smelling incense on it, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ²⁸He hung the curtain at the entrance to the sacred tent. ²⁹At the entrance to the sacred tent where they would meet with Yahweh, he placed the altar for burning sacrifices. Then he sacrificed meat and flour by burning them on it, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ³⁰He set the washbasin between the sacred tent and the bronze altar, and filled the washbasin with water. ³¹Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and feet in the washbasin. ³²Whenever they went into the sacred tent and whenever they came close to the altar, they would wash themselves, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ³³He hung up {the curtains that} surrounded the sacred tent and the altar and the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. Then Moses was finished building the sacred tent complex.

³⁴Then the tall cloud covered the sacred tent, and Yahweh's power and brilliant light filled the sacred tent.

³⁵Because the cloud covered it and Yahweh's light was very bright, Moses was not able to enter the sacred tent.

³⁶{From that day,} whenever Yahweh's cloud moved off of the sacred, tent the Israelites would {pack their camp} and start traveling. ³⁷But if the cloud did not move, they stayed where they were and waited for a day that the cloud moved. ³⁸Wherever the Israelites traveled, Yahweh's cloud was above the sacred tent during the day, and his fire was over it at night. The Israelites could always see {that Yahweh was with them}.

Leviticus

Chapter 1

¹While Moses was standing near the entrance to the sacred tent, Yahweh called to him from inside the tent. He said to Moses ²to say this to the Israelite people: "When any of you brings an offering to Yahweh, bring one of your sheep or goats or cattle.

³If what you are offering is a bull to be completely burned on the altar, it must be without any defect. You must take it to the entrance to the sacred tent, in order that it may be acceptable to Yahweh. ⁴You must lay your hands on the head of the bull. When you do that, Yahweh will accept its death in your place to forgive you for the sins that you have committed. ⁵You must slaughter the young bull in front of Yahweh. Then Aaron's sons, who are priests, will bring the blood and throw it against all sides of the altar near the entrance to the sacred tent. ⁶You must remove the skin of the animal and cut the animal into pieces. You must wash the inner parts and the legs of the bull. ⁷Then Aaron's sons will put wood fire on the altar and arrange the wood on the fire. ⁸Then they will arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood. ⁹Then one of the priests will completely burn all of it on the altar. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh.

¹⁰If you are offering a sheep or a goat, it must be a male without any defect. ¹¹You must slaughter it in front of Yahweh, on the north side of the altar and drain all the blood into a bowl. Then Aaron's sons will sprinkle the blood against all sides of the altar. ¹²You must cut the animal into pieces. You must wash the inner parts and the legs of the animal. Then the priests will arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood. ¹³Then one of the priests will take all of it and completely burn all of it on the altar. And the good odor as the sacrifice burns will be pleasing to Yahweh.

¹⁴If what you are offering to Yahweh is birds, you must offer a dove or a young pigeon. ¹⁵The priest will take it to the altar and wring off its head. Then he will burn the head on the altar. He will drain out the bird's blood onto the side of the altar. ¹⁶Then he will remove the bird's craw and what is inside it, and throw it on the east side of the altar, where they also throw the ashes. ¹⁷Then he will grasp the bird's wings and tear the bird open partially, but never all the way. Then he will burn it completely in the fire on the altar. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh.

Chapter 2

¹If you bring to Yahweh an offering of flour, it must consist of finely ground flour. You must pour olive oil on it, as well as some incense, ²and take it to one of the priests. The priest will take a handful of it with the oil and the incense on it and burn it on the altar. That part will symbolize that all of the offering truly belongs to Yahweh. And the aroma will be pleasing to Yahweh. ³The part of that flour offering that is not burned will belong to Aaron and his sons. It is something set apart for the priests out of the offerings that you will give to Yahweh.

⁴If you bring an offering that is made from flour, something that is baked in an oven, it must be made from finely ground flour. You may bring loaves made from flour mixed with olive oil but without yeast, or you may bring wafers with olive oil smeared on them, but also made without yeast. ⁵If your flour offering is cooked on a griddle, it must be made from finely ground flour mixed with olive oil and without yeast. ⁶You must crumble it and pour olive oil on it. That will be your offering made from flour. ⁷If your offering that is made from flour is cooked in a pan, it must be made of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. ⁸Bring to Yahweh your flour offering. Give it to the priest, and he will take it to the altar. ⁹He will take a part of it that will symbolize that all the flour offering belongs to Yahweh. He will burn that part on the altar, and the good odor as it burns will be pleasing to Yahweh. ¹⁰The part of the flour

offering that is not burned will belong to Aaron and his sons. It is something set apart for God from the offerings given to Yahweh by burning them in a fire.

¹¹Every flour offering that is made from grain and that you bring to Yahweh must be made without yeast, because you must not put any yeast or honey in any offering to Yahweh that a priest burns on the altar. ¹²You may bring to Yahweh an offering of the first part of your harvest, but that offering is not to be burned on the altar to produce a good odor that will be pleasing to Yahweh. ¹³Put salt on all your offerings that are made from flour. The salt represents the covenant that your God made with you, so be sure that you do not forget to put salt on those flour offerings.

¹⁴If you bring to Yahweh a flour offering from the first part of your harvest of grain, offer some new grain that has been crushed and roasted in a fire. ¹⁵Put olive oil and incense on it, and that will be your offering made from flour. ¹⁶The priest will take a part of it that will symbolize that all the offering truly belongs to Yahweh. He will burn that part on the altar, to be an offering given to Yahweh by burning it in a fire.

Chapter 3

¹When you offer to Yahweh an animal to promise friendship with him, you may bring a bull or a cow from your herd of cattle, but what you present to Yahweh must be an animal that has no defects. ²You must bring the animal to the entrance to the sacred tent. You must lay your hands on its head. Then you must slaughter it and catch some of its blood in a bowl. Then one of Aaron's sons, one of the priests, will sprinkle the blood against all sides of the altar. ³From that offering you must bring to Yahweh a sacrifice that a priest will burn in the fire. That will consist of all the fat that covers the inner parts of the animal, or which is attached to them— ⁴the kidneys and the fat that is attached to them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ⁵Then one of the priests will burn those things on the altar, along with the other parts of the animal that he will completely burn as an offering to Yahweh. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh.

⁶If that offering to promise friendship with Yahweh is a sheep or a goat, it must also be an animal that has no defects. ⁷If you offer a lamb, you must present it to Yahweh at the entrance to the sacred tent. You must lay your hands on the lamb's head and then slaughter it. You must catch some of its blood in a bowl. ⁸Then one of the priests will sprinkle that blood against all sides of the altar. ⁹From that offering you must separate these things to be a sacrifice to Yahweh that is burned: Its fat, the fat tail that you must cut off close to the backbone, and all the fat that covers the inner parts of the lamb or which is attached to them— ¹⁰the kidneys with the fat that is on them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ¹¹One of the priests will burn those things on the altar to be an offering to Yahweh. Those things will come from your food supplies.

¹²If your offering is a goat, you must take it to Yahweh. ¹³You must lay your hands on its head. Then you must slaughter it in front of the sacred tent. Then one of Aaron's sons will sprinkle the blood against all sides of the altar. ¹⁴From that offering you must separate these things to be a sacrifice to Yahweh that is burned: All the fat that covers the inner parts of the animal or which is attached to them. ¹⁵Also separate the kidneys with the fat that is on them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ¹⁶The priest will burn those things on the altar to be an offering to Yahweh. Those things will come from your food supplies. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh. All the fat of the animals that are sacrificed belongs to Yahweh.

¹⁷This is a command that must be obeyed by you and your descendants forever, wherever you live. You must not eat the fat or the blood of any animal."

Chapter 4

¹Then Yahweh told Moses ²to say this to the Israelite people, "This is what anyone must do if he sins without intending to sin, that is, if he does something that breaks any of Yahweh's commands.

³If the high priest sins and that causes all the people to be guilty, he must bring to Yahweh a young bull that has no defects. That will be an offering for the sin that he has committed. ⁴He must bring the bull to the entrance to the sacred tent. He must lay his hands on its head. Then he must slaughter it in front of Yahweh and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ⁵Then the priest must take some of that blood into the sacred tent. ⁶He must dip one of his fingers into the blood and sprinkle it seven times in the presence of Yahweh, in front of the curtain that separates the holy place from the very holy place. ⁷Then he must put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar where fragrant incense is burned in the sacred tent in the presence of Yahweh. The remaining part of the bull's blood that is still in the bowl, he must pour out at the base of the altar, where sacrifices are burned, at the entrance to the sacred tent. ⁸From that offering the high priest must separate these things from the bull that is to be burned: The fat that covers the inner parts of the bull or which is attached to them— ⁹the kidneys and the fat that is attached to them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ¹⁰Then the high priest must completely burn those things on the altar. That will be just like when the fat is removed from an animal that is sacrificed to promised friendship with Yahweh. ¹¹But all the other parts of the animal—its skin and all its other meat, its head and its legs, its inner parts and the intestines, ¹²he must take outside the camp and throw them in a place that is made acceptable to Yahweh, where the ashes are thrown, and he must burn them in a fire on the pile of ashes.

¹³If all the Israelite people sin without intending to sin, doing something that is forbidden in any of Yahweh's commands, they will be guilty, even if they do not realize that they have sinned. ¹⁴When they realize that they have committed a sin, together they must bring a young bull to be an offering for their sin, to the front of the sacred tent. ¹⁵The elders must lay their hands on the bull's head in the presence of Yahweh and slaughter it and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ¹⁶Then the high priest must take some of that blood into the sacred tent. ¹⁷He must dip one of his fingers into the blood and sprinkle it seven times in the presence of Yahweh, in front of the curtain that separates the holy place from the very holy place. ¹⁸Then he must put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar that is in the presence of Yahweh in the sacred tent. The remaining part of the bull's blood he must pour out at the base of the altar where sacrifices are burned, at the entrance of the sacred tent. ¹⁹He must remove all the animal's fat and burn it on the altar. ²⁰He must do with this bull the same things that he did with the bull that was an offering for his own sins, and they will be forgiven. ²¹Then the priest must take the other parts of the bull outside the camp and burn them, like he does when he himself has sinned. That will be the offering for the sin that all the people have committed, and they will be forgiven.

²²When one of the leaders sins without intending to sin, doing something that is forbidden in any of the commands of Yahweh his God, he will be guilty. ²³When he realizes that he has committed a sin, he must bring as his offering a male goat that has no defects. ²⁴He must lay his hands on the goat's head in the presence of Yahweh and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the animals that will be completely burned on the altar. That will be an offering for his sin. ²⁵Then the priest must put some of the animal's blood into a bowl and dip one of his fingers in it and put some of the blood on the corners of the projections of the altar. Then he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ²⁶Then he must burn all the fat on the altar, like was done with the fat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh. As a result of the priest's doing that, the leader will no longer be guilty for his sin and he will be forgiven.

²⁷If one of the Israelite people who is not a priest sins without intending to sin, and does something that is forbidden in any of the commands of Yahweh his God, he will be guilty. ²⁸When he realizes that he has committed a sin, he must bring as his offering a female goat that has no defects. ²⁹He must lay his hands on the goat's head and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the animals that they will burn completely on the altar, and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ³⁰Then the priest must dip one of his fingers in it, and put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar. Then he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³¹Then he must remove all the goat's fat, and burn all the fat on the altar, like was done with the fat of the offering to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh. As a result of the priest doing that, the person will no longer be guilty for his sin, and he will be forgiven.

³²If that person brings a lamb to be his offering for sin, he must bring a female lamb that has no defects. ³³He must lay his hands on the lamb's head and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the animals that will be completely burned on the altar, and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ³⁴Then the priest must dip one of his fingers in it and put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar. Then he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³⁵Then he must remove all the lamb's fat, and burn all the fat on the altar, like was done with the fat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh. He must burn it on top of the other offerings to Yahweh that are being burned. As a result, the priest will request God to forgive that person for his sin, and he will be forgiven.

Chapter 5

¹If a judge orders any of you to tell in court something that you have seen or something that you heard someone say, but if you refuse to say what you know to be true, you must pay a penalty for refusing to tell what you know.

²If you accidentally touch something which God considers impure such as the carcass of a wild animal or the carcass of your animals that has died, or of an animal that crawls along the ground, you must pay a penalty.

³If you touch anything that has made anyone else unacceptable to God, even if you did not intend to touch it, when you realize what you have done, you must pay a penalty.

⁴If you carelessly make a solemn promise to do something that is either good or that is bad, when you realize that you cannot do it, you must pay a penalty.

⁵If you are guilty of committing any of those sins, you must confess what you have done. ⁶And as a penalty, you must bring to Yahweh a female lamb or female goat as an offering for the sin that you have committed, and the priest will sacrifice it, and then you will no longer be guilty for your sin.

⁷If you are poor and cannot afford to bring a lamb, you must bring to Yahweh two doves or two pigeons. One will be an offering for your sin, and the other will be an offering that will be completely burned on the altar. ⁸You must bring them to the priest. First he will offer one of them to be an offering for your sin. He will wring its neck to kill it, but he must not pull off its head completely. ⁹Then he must sprinkle some of the blood against the side of the altar. The remaining blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. That will be an offering for your sin. ¹⁰The priest will then do what I have commanded and offer the other bird to be completely burned on the altar. Then you will no longer be guilty for the sin you have committed, and Yahweh will forgive you.

¹¹However, if you are very poor and cannot afford two doves or two pigeons, you must bring to be an offering for your sin two liters of fine flour. You must not put olive oil or incense on it, because it is an offering for sin. ¹²You must take it to the priest. He will take a handful of it to symbolize that the whole offering truly belongs to Yahweh, and burn it on the altar, on top of the other offerings. ¹³When he does that, the priest will enable you to no longer be guilty for any of the sins that you have committed, and God will forgive you. The part of the offering that is not burned will belong to the priest, just as in the case of the offerings made from flour."

¹⁴Yahweh also said to Moses to tell the people: ¹⁵"When you sin, without intending to, by not giving to me, Yahweh, the things that you are required to give to him, you must pay a penalty by bringing to me a ram that has no defects. You must determine how much silver it is worth, by using the official standard in the sacred tent. It will be an offering to cause you to no longer be guilty. ¹⁶But you must also make restitution for failing to pay him what has been set apart as only for him. Also, you must add one-fifth of its value. You must give that to the priest. He will offer the ram as a sacrifice for the sin that you have committed and cause you to no longer be guilty, and I will forgive you.

¹⁷If you sin by doing something that is forbidden in any of my commands, even if you do not know that you have disobeyed one of my commands, you are still guilty; you must pay a penalty to me. ¹⁸When you realize what you have done, you must bring a ram to the priest as an offering in order that you will no longer be guilty. You must

bring one that has no defects. The priest will offer the ram to be a sacrifice to me, and as a result you will no longer be guilty for the sin that you have committed, and I will forgive you. ¹⁹It is an offering to cause you to no longer be guilty for sinning against me."

Chapter 6

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"If you sin against me by deceiving someone—if you refuse to return what someone has lent you, or if you steal something of his, ³or if you find something and swear that you do not have it, you are guilty. ⁴You must return to its owner what you have stolen or what someone has lent to you and you have not returned, or what you found that someone else had lost, or whatever you lied about. ⁵You must not only return anything like that to its owner, but you must also pay to the owner an additional one-fifth of its value. ⁶You must also bring to the priest a ram to be an offering to me, in order that you will no longer be guilty. The ram that you bring must be one that has no defects, one that has the value that has been officially determined. ⁷Then the priest will offer that ram to be a sacrifice that will cause you to no longer be guilty, and I will forgive you for the wrong things that you did."

⁸Yahweh also said to Moses, ⁹"Tell this to Aaron and his sons: These are the regulations concerning the offerings that will be completely burned on the altar: The offering must remain on the altar all during the night, and the fire on the altar must always be kept burning. ¹⁰The next morning the priest must put on his linen underclothes and linen outer clothes. Then he must remove the ashes of the offering from the fire and put them beside the altar. ¹¹Then he must take off those clothes and put on other clothes, and take the ashes outside the camp, to a place that has been made acceptable to me. ¹²The fire on the altar must always be kept burning. The priest must not allow it to go out. Each morning the priest must put more firewood on the fire. Then he must arrange more offerings on the fire, and burn on the altar the fat of the offerings to be burned to promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹³The fire on the altar must be kept burning continually. The priest must not allow it to go out."

¹⁴"These are the regulations concerning the offerings made from flour. Aaron's sons must bring them to Yahweh in front of the altar. ¹⁵The priest must take a handful of fine flour mixed with olive oil and incense and burn that on the altar. That handful will signify that the whole offering truly belongs to me. And the good odor, while the offering burns, will be pleasing to me. ¹⁶Aaron and his sons may eat the remaining part of the grain offering. But they must eat it in a place that is set apart for God, in the courtyard of the sacred tent. ¹⁷It must not have yeast mixed with it. Like the offerings for sin and the offerings to cause people to no longer be guilty of sin, that offering is very special, reserved for me. ¹⁸Any male descendants of Aaron are permitted to eat it, because it is their permanent regular share of the offerings given to me and burned in the fire on the altar. Whoever touches them will be considered to be set apart for the honor of Yahweh."

¹⁹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁰"Tell Aaron and his sons that this is the offering that they must bring to me on the day that any of them is ordained: That person must bring two liters of fine flour as an offering made from grain flour. He must bring half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening. ²¹He must mix it well with olive oil and bake it in a shallow pan. He must then break it into small pieces to be burned on the altar. And the good odor, while it burns, will be pleasing to me. ²²I have commanded that the descendants of Aaron who are appointed to become the high priests after Aaron dies are the ones who must prepare those things. They must be completely burned on the altar to be sacrifices to me. ²³Every offering that a priest gives that is made from flour must be completely burned. No one is to eat any of it."

²⁴Yahweh also told Moses to ²⁵tell Aaron and his sons, "These are the regulations concerning the offerings for the sins of the people. The priest will kill the sacrifice at the place where the offerings are burned; it is killed before Yahweh and the offering is dedicated to Yahweh. ²⁶The priest who makes the offering for sin, may eat the offering given to Yahweh. The priest can only eat it in the place in the courtyard that has been set apart for eating sacrifices. ²⁷Any other person who touches any of its meat will belong to me. And if its blood is splattered on your clothes, you must wash the clothes in a holy place. ²⁸If the meat is cooked in a clay pot, the pot must be broken afterwards.

But if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot must be scoured afterwards and rinsed with water. ²⁹Any male in a priest's family may eat some of the cooked meat. That meat is very special. ³⁰But if the blood of those offerings is brought into the sacred tent to enable the people to be forgiven for having sinned, the meat of those animals must not be eaten. The priest must burn that meat completely."

Chapter 7

¹"These are the regulations concerning the offerings for when people are guilty of not giving to Yahweh the things that are required to be given to him. Those are very sacred offerings. ²A priest must slaughter each animal that people offer for this purpose in the same place where they slaughter the animals that they will completely burn. The priest must sprinkle the animal's blood on all sides of the altar. ³All their fat, the fat tails that are cut close to the backbone, and all the fat that covers the inner parts of the animals or which is attached to them, must be burned on the altar. ⁴This includes the kidneys with their fat near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. The priest must remove all these fatty pieces. ⁵The priest must burn these pieces on the altar to be offerings to me, Yahweh. They are an offering for the people, for me to forgive them when they have not done what I required them to do. ⁶All the males in the priest's family are permitted to eat its meat, but it must be eaten in a place set apart for me, because it is very special to me.

⁷The regulation is the same for the offerings to cause people to become acceptable to me again and the offerings for when they are guilty of not giving to me the things that I required from them. The meat of those offerings belongs to the priest who offers them. ⁸When a priest slaughters an animal that he will completely burn on the altar, he may keep the animal's hide for himself. ⁹Offerings of things made from flour that are baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or in a shallow pan belong to the priest who sacrifices those things for another person. ¹⁰And offerings of things made from flour, whether they were mixed with olive oil or not, also belong to the Aaron's descendants.

¹¹These are the regulations concerning the offerings that people make to promise friendship with Yahweh.

¹²If you bring an offering to thank Yahweh, along with the animal that you slaughter you must offer loaves of bread made with olive oil mixed with the flour but without yeast, and wafers that are made without yeast but with olive oil smeared on them, and loaves made from fine flour with olive oil mixed well with the flour. ¹³Along with that offering to thank Yahweh, you must bring an offering of loaves made with yeast. ¹⁴You must bring one of each kind for an offering to Yahweh, but they belong to the priest who sprinkles against the altar the blood of the animal that is slaughtered as an offering to promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹⁵The meat of that offering must be eaten on the day that it is offered. None of it may be left to be eaten on the next day.

¹⁶However, if your offering is the result of a vow that you made to Yahweh, or if it is an offering that you make voluntarily, you may eat some of the meat on the day it is offered, and anything that is left may be eaten on the next day. ¹⁷But any meat that is left until the third day must be completely burned. ¹⁸If any meat from the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh is eaten on the third day, Yahweh will not accept that offering. It will be useless to offer it because Yahweh will consider that it is worthless. Anyone who eats some of it will have to pay a penalty to Yahweh.

¹⁹Meat that touches something that God considers to be impure must not be eaten. It must be completely burned. But as for other meat, anyone who has performed the rituals to become acceptable to God is allowed to eat it. ²⁰If anyone who has not performed those rituals eats some of the meat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh, meat that belongs to Yahweh, he must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people. ²¹If anyone touches something that God considers to be impure and very displeasing to him, whether it is from a human or from an animal, and then he eats any of the meat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh, meat that belongs to Yahweh, he must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people."

²²Yahweh also said to Moses: ²³"Say this to the Israelite people: 'Do not eat any of the fat of cattle or sheep or goats. ²⁴The fat of an animal that is found dead or that has been killed by a wild animal may be used for other purposes, but you must not eat it. ²⁵Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering has been made to Yahweh must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people. ²⁶And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. ²⁷If anyone eats blood, he must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people."

²⁸Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁹"Tell the Israelite people this: 'Anyone who brings an offering to promise friendship with Yahweh must bring part of it to be a sacrifice to Yahweh. ³⁰He himself must bring the offering that will be burned in the fire. He must bring the fat along with the breast of the animal and lift it high in front of Yahweh to present it as an offering to him. ³¹The priest must burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and all his descendants. ³²You must give to the priest the right thigh of the animal that you presented to promise friendship with Yahweh. ³³The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of that sacrifice will receive the right thigh of the animal as his share. ³⁴From the offerings that the Israelite people give to promise friendship with Yahweh, he has declared that he has given to Aaron and his descendants the breast that is lifted high and the right thigh that is offered. Those portions will always be their regular share from the Israelite people.

³⁵Those are the portions of the offerings brought to Yahweh and burned in fire that are allotted to Aaron and his descendants on the day that you, Moses, will set apart to serve Yahweh as priests. ³⁶Yahweh commands that on the day that the priests are appointed, that the Israelite people must always give those portions to the priests."

³⁷So those are the regulations for the offerings that are to be completely burned on the altar, the offerings made from flour, the offerings to cause people to become acceptable to God again, the offerings for when people are guilty of not giving to Yahweh the things that are required to be given to him, the offerings given when the priests are appointed, and the offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. ³⁸They are regulations that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the Israelite people to start bringing their offerings to him, in the wilderness around Sinai.

Chapter 8

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"Bring Aaron and his sons, and bring their special clothes, the oil for anointing them, the bull to be offered to cause them to become acceptable to God, the two rams to be slaughtered, and the basket containing bread made without yeast. ³Then gather all the people at the entrance to the sacred tent." ⁴Moses did what Yahweh told him to do, and all the people gathered there.

⁵Then Moses said to the people, "This is what Yahweh has commanded us to do." ⁶Then he brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them. ⁷He put the special tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, put on him the special robe, and put on him the sacred vest. He fastened the sacred vest around him, using the finely woven waistband. ⁸He put the sacred pouch on his chest and put into it the two stones for him to use to determine what God wants. ⁹Then he wrapped the turban around Aaron's head and fastened on the front of it the gold ornament the object that showed that he was dedicated to God, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁰Then Moses took the olive oil and anointed the sacred tent and everything in it, and dedicated it all to Yahweh.

¹¹He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times. He anointed the altar and all the things used with it, and its huge washbasin and its stand, to dedicate them to Yahweh. ¹²He poured some of the oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to dedicate him to Yahweh. ¹³Then he brought forward Aaron's sons. He put tunics on them, tied sashes around them, and wrapped turbans around their heads, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁴Then he brought the bull for the offering to cause people to become acceptable to God. Then Aaron and his sons put their hands on the bull's head. ¹⁵Then Moses slaughtered the bull, caught some of its blood in a bowl, and with his finger put some of it on the projections at the corners of the altar, to purify the altar. He poured the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. By doing that, he caused it to be a suitable place for burning sacrifices for sin.

¹⁶Moses took all the fat that covers the inner parts of the animal, including the liver and kidneys, and burned them on the altar. ¹⁷He took the rest of the bull, including the hide and intestines, and burned them outside the camp, like Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁸Then he brought the ram for the offering that would be completely burned on the altar, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ¹⁹Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled its blood on all sides of the altar.

²⁰⁻²¹He cut the ram into pieces and washed the inner parts and hind legs. Then he put the head, the fat, and the other parts of the ram on the altar. As it burned, the aroma of the smoke was pleasing to Yahweh. It was an offering to Yahweh that was burned, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²²Then he brought the other ram, the one for consecrating the priests, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ²³⁻²⁴Moses slaughtered that ram, caught some of its blood in a bowl, and put some of that blood on the lobes of the right ears, the thumbs of the right hands, and the big toes of the right feet of Aaron and his sons to indicate that what they listened to and what they did and where they went should be directed by Yahweh. ²⁵He picked up all the fat of the ram, its fat tail, the fat that covered the inner parts, including the fat that covered the liver and kidneys, and the right thigh of the ram. ²⁶⁻²⁷Then from the basket containing the bread that was made without yeast, the bread which had been dedicated to Yahweh, he picked up one loaf of bread made without olive oil, and one loaf that was made by mixing the flour with olive oil, and one wafer. He put those on top of the portions of fat, and put them into the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then they lifted them up in the presence of Yahweh to show that it was an offering that belonged to him. ²⁸Then Moses took those things from their hands and burned them on the altar. That was the offering that was burned to appoint Aaron and his sons as priests. And the aroma while it burned was pleasing to Yahweh. ²⁹Moses also took the breast of the second ram and lifted it high before Yahweh to offer it to him, as Yahweh had commanded. The breast was Moses' share of the ram that was sacrificed to dedicate the priests.

³⁰Then Moses took some of the olive oil for anointing Aaron and his sons, and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his sons and on their clothes. By doing that, he set apart Aaron to be priest, together with his sons and their clothes.

³¹Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the meat of the second ram at the entrance of the sacred tent, and eat it there with the bread that is in the basket, as I told you to do. ³²Burn up any of the meat and bread that remains. ³³The time for you to be set apart as priests will be seven days, so do not leave the entrance of the sacred tent for seven days. ³⁴What we have done today is what Yahweh commanded to cause you to be forgiven for your sins. ³⁵You must stay at the entrance to the sacred tent for seven days and seven nights and do what Yahweh requires, in order that you will not die because of disobeying him. I am telling you that because that is what Yahweh has commanded me to tell you."

³⁶So Aaron and his sons did everything that Yahweh told Moses to tell them.

Chapter 9

¹Eight days later Moses summoned the elders of Israel. ²Then he said to Aaron, "Take a young bull so you can offer it for your sins, and a ram so that you can burn it whole on the altar, both of them without any defects, and offer them to Yahweh. ³Then say to the Israelite people, 'Take a male goat to offer it for your sins. Also take a calf and a lamb that have no defects, so that you can burn them whole on the altar. ⁴Also take an ox and a ram to offer them, so you may promise friendship with Yahweh, along with an offering of flour mixed with olive oil. Do this because today Yahweh is going to appear to you.'"

⁵After Moses gave these instructions to the Israelites, some of them brought these things and went to the courtyard in front of the sacred tent. Then all the people came near and stood in front of Yahweh. ⁶Then Moses said, "This is what Yahweh has commanded you to do, in order that his glory will appear to you."

⁷Then Moses said to Aaron, "Come to the altar and sacrifice the animal that is your offering to enable you to be forgiven for the sins you have committed. Also bring the animal that you will burn whole on the altar. Because of those offerings, God will forgive you and the people for the sins that you have committed. Do these things that Yahweh has commanded you to do."

⁸So Aaron came up to the altar and slaughtered the calf as an offering for his sins. ⁹His sons brought its blood to him in a bowl. He dipped his finger into the blood and put some of it on the projections at the corners of the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ¹⁰He burned the fat, including that which covered the kidneys and the liver, as Yahweh had commanded him. ¹¹Then Aaron went outside the camp and there burned the rest of the meat and the hide.

¹²Then Aaron slaughtered the animal that he was going to burn whole on the altar. His sons handed him the bowl containing its blood, and he sprinkled the blood on all sides of the altar. ¹³Then they handed him the head and the pieces of the animal that would be burned, and he burned them on the altar. ¹⁴He washed the inner parts and the legs of the animal, and he burned them on the altar, on top of the other pieces of the animal.

¹⁵Then Aaron brought the animals that would be sacrifices for the Israelite people. He took a goat and slaughtered it for the people's sins, as he had done with the goat for his own offering.

¹⁶Then he brought the animal for the offering in order to burn it whole. He slaughtered it and offered it in the way that Yahweh had commanded him to do. ¹⁷He also brought the offering made from flour. He took a handful of it and burned it on the altar, as he had done with the animal that he had sacrificed earlier that morning.

¹⁸Then he slaughtered the ox and the ram to be an offering for the Israelite people to promise friendship with Yahweh. His sons handed him the bowl containing the blood, and he sprinkled the blood against all sides of the altar. ¹⁹But he took the fat from the ox and the ram, including their fat tails that were cut close to the backbone, and all the fat that covered the livers and the kidneys. ²⁰He put these parts on top of the breasts of those animals and carried them to the altar to burn them. ²¹Then, doing what Moses had commanded, he lifted up in front of Yahweh the breast and the right thigh of those animals to show that those two animals completely belonged to Yahweh.

²²Then Aaron lifted his arms toward the people and asked Yahweh to bless them. Then having finished making all those offerings, he stepped down from the place where the altar was.

²³Then Aaron and Moses entered the sacred tent. When they came out later, they asked Yahweh to bless the people. And suddenly the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the people. ²⁴A fire from Yahweh appeared and burned up the entire offering, together with the fat that was on the altar. When all the people saw this happen, they shouted joyfully and prostrated themselves on the ground to worship Yahweh.

Chapter 10

¹Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took the pans in which they burned incense. They put some burning coals in them and put incense on top of the coals, but this fire was not acceptable to Yahweh because it was not the kind that he had commanded them to burn. ²So suddenly a fire from Yahweh appeared and burned them up in his own presence. ³Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what Yahweh was talking about when he said,

'Those priests who come near to me—

I will show them that they must honor me;

in the presence of all the people

I am the one whom they must honor.'"

But Aaron said nothing.

⁴Then Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, who were the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Take the corpses of your cousins outside the camp, away from being in front of the sacred tent." ⁵So they carried the corpses, on which were still the special tunics, outside the camp, and buried them.

⁶Then Moses said to Aaron and his other two sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "You are sad because Nadab and Abihu died, but you must act like you always do. Do not allow the hair on your heads to remain uncombed, and do not tear your clothes. If you do, Yahweh will be angry with all the people. But you must let your relatives and all your fellow Israelites engage in mourning ceremonies for those whom Yahweh has destroyed by fire. ⁷But you must not leave the entrance of the sacred tent to join those who are mourning, because if you do that, you also will die. Do not forget that Yahweh has set you apart to work for him here, and he does not want you to become defiled by touching a corpse." So they obeyed Moses; they did not join the rest of the people in mourning for their cousins' death.

⁸Then Yahweh said to Aaron, ⁹"You and your two sons who are still alive must not drink wine or other fermented drinks before you enter the sacred tent. If you do that, you will die. That is a command that you and your descendants must obey forever. ¹⁰You must do that in order to learn what things are holy and what things are not holy; you must also learn what things I will accept what I will not accept. ¹¹And you must teach the Israelite people all the laws that I gave to them by telling them to Moses."

¹²Moses said to Aaron and his two sons who were still alive, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the offering made from flour that is left after a portion of it has been offered to Yahweh to be burned, and eat it alongside the altar. It should not be eaten elsewhere because it is very holy. ¹³Eat it in a holy place. It is the share for you and your sons from the meat that you have burned as offerings. Yahweh has commanded me to tell you this. ¹⁴But you and your sons and daughters are permitted to eat the breast and the thigh that were lifted up in front of Yahweh. Eat them in any place that is holy. They have been given to you and your descendants as your share of the offerings when the Israelites promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹⁵The thigh and the breast that were lifted up in front of Yahweh must be brought with the portions of fat to be burned, to be lifted up and offered in his presence. They will be the regular share for you and your descendants, as Yahweh has commanded."

¹⁶When Moses inquired about the goat that the priests had sacrificed for the people's sins, he found out that the priests had burned it all. So he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar and asked them, ¹⁷"Why did you not eat near the sacred tent the meat of the sin offering? It was very special for Yahweh; he gave it to you so he could forgive the sins of the people. ¹⁸Since its blood was not taken into the holy place inside the sacred tent, you should have eaten the meat of the goat outside the sacred tent, as I commanded."

¹⁹Aaron replied to Moses, "Today the people brought to Yahweh their offering for him to forgive their sins, and also the offering we burned completely to please Yahweh. But think about the terrible thing that happened to my other two sons! Would Yahweh have been pleased if I had eaten some of the people's sin offering today?" ²⁰When Moses heard that, he was satisfied and said nothing more.

Chapter 11

¹Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²"Tell the people that this is what I say: 'Of all the animals that live on the land, these are the ones that you are permitted to eat. ³The ones that have hooves that are completely split and that chew their cuds—you may eat these animals.

⁴There are some animals that chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, and some animals that have split hooves but do not chew their cuds. You must not eat any of those animals. For example, camels chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, so they are unacceptable for you to eat. ⁵Rock badgers chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, so they are unacceptable for you to eat. ⁶Rabbits chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, so they are unacceptable for you to eat. ⁷Pigs have completely split hooves but they do not chew their cuds, so they

are not acceptable for you to eat. ⁸All of those animals are unacceptable for you, so you must not eat their meat or even touch their carcasses.

⁹Of all the creatures that live in the oceans and the streams, you are permitted to eat any that have fins and scales.

¹⁰But you must detest and not eat those that do not have fins and scales. That include creatures that are very small. ¹¹You must despise them, and you must not eat their meat, and you must detest their carcasses. ¹²You must detest everything that lives in the water that does not have fins and scales.

¹³There are some birds that you must detest and not eat. They include eagles, vultures, ¹⁴kites, any kind of falcon, ¹⁵any kind of raven, ¹⁶horned owls, screech owls, seagulls, and any kind of hawk. ¹⁷Also small owls, large owls, cormorants, ¹⁸white owls, barn owls, ospreys, ¹⁹storks, any kind of heron, hoopoes, and bats.

²⁰You must detest and not eat flying insects that also walk on the ground. ²¹But you are permitted to eat creatures with wings that sometimes walk on the ground if they have jointed legs for hopping around. ²²They include locusts, katydids, crickets, and grasshoppers. ²³But you must detest and not eat other insects with wings that have four legs.

²⁴There are certain creatures that will make you unacceptable to me if you touch their carcasses. Anyone who touches their carcasses must not touch other people until that evening. ²⁵Anyone who picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes and not touch other people until that evening.

²⁶The animals whose carcasses you must not touch are those that have hooves that are not completely divided or animals that do not chew their cud. Anyone who touches the carcasses of any of those animals becomes defiled.

²⁷From all the animals that walk on the ground, you must not touch the carcasses of those that have paws to walk on. Anyone who touches one of their carcasses must not touch other people until that evening. ²⁸Anyone who picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes and not touch other people until that evening, because touching their carcasses makes you unacceptable to me.

²⁹Of all the animals that walk on the ground, these are the ones that make you unacceptable if you touch them: Weasels, rats, any kind of big lizard, ³⁰geckos, monitor lizards and other lizards, skinks, and chameleons. ³¹The creatures that crawl along the ground make you unacceptable to me. Anyone who touches one of their carcasses must not touch other people until the evening. ³²When one of those creatures dies and falls on something, the thing that it falls on, whatever it is used for, will become defiled, whether it is made of wood, cloth, the hide of some animal or from rough cloth. You must put the object into water. Then you must not use it until that evening.

³³If one of those unclean creatures falls into a clay pot, everything in it becomes defiled, and you must break that pot. ³⁴If you pour water from that pot onto any food, you must not eat that food. And you must not drink any water from that pot. ³⁵Anything that one of the carcasses of those creatures falls on becomes defiled, even if the creature falls into an oven or a cooking pot. Anything that it falls on must be broken. It becomes unacceptable to me, and you must not use it again. ³⁶If one of their carcasses falls into a spring or a pit for storing water, the water may still be drunk, but anyone who touches one of those carcasses becomes unacceptable to me. ³⁷If one of those carcasses falls on seeds that are to be planted, those seeds are still acceptable to be planted. ³⁸But if water has been put on the seeds and then a carcass falls on it, the seeds must be thrown away; you must regard them as unacceptable.

³⁹If an animal whose meat you are permitted to eat dies, anyone who touches its carcass must not touch other people until that evening. ⁴⁰Anyone who eats some meat from that carcass must wash his clothes, and then he must not touch anyone until that evening. Anyone who picks up such a carcass will wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

⁴¹⁻⁴²All creatures that crawl along the ground, including those that move on their bellies and those that crawl along, are detestable, and they must not be eaten. ⁴³Do not defile yourselves by eating any of those creatures. Be very careful about this. ⁴⁴I am Yahweh your God, and I am holy, so you must set yourselves apart for my honor, and you must be holy. You must avoid eating things that cause you to be unacceptable to me. Do not cause yourselves

to become unacceptable to me by eating creatures that crawl along on the ground. ⁴⁵I am Yahweh, the one who freed you from being slaves in Egypt, in order that you might worship me. Therefore, because I am holy, you must be holy.

⁴⁶Those are the regulations concerning animals and birds, all the living creatures that live in water or creep along on the ground. ⁴⁷You must learn what things I say are acceptable to me and what things are not, and learn what things you are permitted to eat and what things you are not permitted to eat.”

Chapter 12

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²“Tell this to the Israelite people. If a woman gives birth to a boy, she must be avoided for seven days, as she must be avoided when she is menstruating each month. ³The baby boy must be circumcised eight days after he is born. ⁴Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding during childbirth. She must not touch anything that is sacred, that belongs to me only, or enter the area of the sacred tent, until that time is ended. ⁵If a woman gives birth to a baby girl, she must be avoided for two weeks, as she must be avoided when she is menstruating each month. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding when the baby was born.

⁶When that time for her to be purified is ended, that woman must bring to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent a one year old lamb. The priest will burn it whole on the altar. The woman must also bring a dove or a young pigeon for the priest to sacrifice it, so that Yahweh will accept her again. ⁷The priest will offer these animals to Yahweh in order that she may be made acceptable to him again. Then she will be purified from her flow of blood when the baby was born.

Those are the regulations for women who give birth to a baby boy or girl. ⁸If a woman who gives birth to a child cannot afford a lamb, she must bring two doves or two pigeons. One will be burned completely on the altar, and one will be an offering to enable her to become acceptable to God again. By doing that, the priest will cause her to be forgiven for any sins she has committed, and she no longer will need to be avoided.”

Chapter 13

¹Yahweh said this to Aaron and Moses: ²“When someone has on his skin a swelling, a scab, or a shiny spot that seems to be infected, then someone must bring him to Aaron or to one of his sons who are also priests. ³The priest must examine that part of the person's skin. If the hair in that area has become white and it appears that the sore is deeper than just on the skin, then it is a skin disease that other people are in danger of receiving from him. If that is what the priest sees, he must declare that this sick person is not fit to be with other people. ⁴If the spot on the person's skin is white but it does not appear that the sore is deeper than the surface of the skin, the priest must keep him away from all other people for seven days. ⁵After seven days, the priest must examine the person again. If the priest sees that the sore has not changed and has not spread, he must keep the person away from people for yet another seven days. ⁶Again, after those seven more days have passed, the priest must examine the person once more. If the sore has faded and has not spread, the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people again. His skin condition is only a rash; it is not contagious. After the person washes his clothes, the priest will allow him to be with other people again. ⁷But if the sore spreads after the priest has examined him, the person must go to the priest again. ⁸The priest will examine him; if the sore has spread to more of the skin, it is a contagious skin disease, and the priest will declare that the person is not fit to be with other people.

⁹When anyone has a contagious skin disease, someone must bring him to the priest. ¹⁰The priest must examine him. If there is a white swelling in the skin that has caused the hair there to become white, and if the flesh in that area is painful, ¹¹then it is a permanent skin disease; the priest will declare that the person is not fit to be with other people. The priest does not need to keep that person away from others for seven days in order to examine him again, because he already knows that the person is unfit to be with others.

¹²If the disease spreads all over someone's body, and the priest examines that person and sees that it is covering his skin from his head to his feet, ¹³and it has caused all his skin to become white which will indicate that the disease has ended, the priest will declare that the person does not have to stay away from other people. ¹⁴But if the person has open sores, he has a contagious skin disease. ¹⁵When the priest sees that, he must declare that the person has a contagious skin disease and is unfit to be with other people. ¹⁶But if the person's flesh changes and becomes white, he must go to the priest again. ¹⁷The priest must examine him again, and if the sores have become white, the priest will declare that this person is now fit to be with other people again.

¹⁸When someone had a boil on his skin and it has now healed, ¹⁹but in the place where the boil was, there is now a white swelling or a bright spot, he must go to the priest. ²⁰The priest must examine it. If it seems to be deeper than the surface of the skin, and if the hair in that spot has become white, it is a contagious skin disease that has appeared where the boil had been. And the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people.

²¹But when the priest examines it, if he finds no white hair in that spot, and if he finds that it is only on the surface of the skin and has become less bright, then the priest must keep him away from other people for seven days.

²²But if it is spreading, it is contagious, and the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people.

²³But if that spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people again.

²⁴When someone has a burn on his skin and a bright or white spot appears, and the flesh in that area is painful,

²⁵the priest must examine the spot. If the hair in that spot has turned white and it seems to be deeper than just the surface of the skin, it is a contagious skin disease that has appeared where the burn was, and the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ²⁶But if the priest examines it and sees that there is no white hair in that spot and it is only on the surface of the skin, and that the spot has faded, the priest must keep the person away from other people for seven days. ²⁷After seven days, the priest will examine him again. If the sore is spreading, it is a contagious skin disease, and the priest will declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ²⁸However, if the spot is not changed and has not spread but has faded, then it is only a scar from the burn; the priest must declare that the person is fit to be with other people.

²⁹If a man or a woman has a sore on the head or chin, ³⁰the priest must examine that person. If the sore seems to be deeper than just on the surface of the skin, and if the hair in that spot has thinned out and has become yellowish, then it is a contagious skin disease that causes itching. In that case, the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ³¹But when the priest examines that kind of sore, if it seems to be only on the surface of the skin and there is no healthy hair in it, the priest will keep the person away from other people for seven days. ³²On the seventh day, the priest must examine the sore again. If it has not spread and if there is no yellow hair in that spot, and if it appears to be only on the surface of the skin, ³³the person must shave the hair near the sore but not the hair on the sore. And the priest will keep the person away from other people for seven more days. ³⁴On the seventh day, the priest must examine that spot again. If it has not spread and it appears to be only on the surface of the skin, the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with people again. The person must wash his clothes, and then he can join with other people. ³⁵But if the sore later spreads, ³⁶the priest must examine him again. If the itch has spread, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair, because it is clear that the person has a contagious skin disease. ³⁷However, if the priest thinks that the spot has not changed, and if healthy hair is growing in that area, it is clear that the itch has healed, and the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people again.

³⁸When a man or a woman has white spots on the skin, ³⁹the priest should examine them. But if the spots are dull white, it is only a rash, and the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people.

⁴⁰If a man loses all his hair and becomes bald, he does not need to stay away from other people. ⁴¹The same is true if he has lost his hair at the front of his scalp and his forehead has become bald. ⁴²But if he gets a bright sore on his bald head or on his forehead, then he has a contagious skin disease. ⁴³The priest must examine him. If the swollen sore is a bright spot like a spot on someone who has a contagious skin disease, ⁴⁴the priest will declare that the man has a contagious skin disease and is not fit to be with other people.

⁴⁵Anyone who has a contagious skin disease must wear torn clothes and not comb his hair. When he is near other people, he must cover the lower part of his face and call out, 'Do not come near me! I have a contagious skin disease!' ⁴⁶He is not allowed to be with other people as long as he has the disease. He must live alone, outside the camp."

⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸"Sometimes a person's clothing gets mildew on it. It may be clothing that is woven from wool or made from linen or from leather, or it may be another item that has leather in it. ⁴⁹If the contaminated part is greenish or reddish, there is spreading mildew, and the owner must show it to a priest. ⁵⁰The priest must examine it and then put it in a separate place by itself for seven days. ⁵¹On the seventh day he must examine it again. If the mildew has spread, it is clear that it is mildew that destroys what it is on, and the clothing or item must not be used again. ⁵²The owner must completely burn the item that has the mildew in it, whatever kind of item it is.

⁵³But when the priest examines it, if the mildew has not spread, ⁵⁴he must tell the person who owns it to wash it. Then he must put it in a separate place for another seven days. ⁵⁵After seven days, the priest must examine it after the mildewed item was washed. If the color of the mildew has not changed, even though it has not spread, that item must not be used again. It does not matter if the mildew is on the inside of the item or on the outside. It must be burned. ⁵⁶But when the priest examines it after it has been washed, if the mildew has faded, he must tear out the part that had the mildew in it. ⁵⁷If the mildew reappears on that item, it is clear that it is spreading, and the owner must burn the entire item. ⁵⁸But after the clothing is washed and the mildew disappears, the owner must wash it again, and then he may use it again.

⁵⁹These are the regulations concerning mildew on things made of wool or linen or leather, for deciding whether the owner may continue to use those things or not."

Chapter 14

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"These are the regulations for anyone who has been healed of a contagious skin disease. ³Other people must tell the priest about that person. The priest will go outside the camp and examine him. If the skin disease has been healed, ⁴the priest will say that someone must bring two live birds that are acceptable to Yahweh, along with some cedar wood, some scarlet yarn, and some hyssop. ⁵Then the priest will command that one of the birds be killed while it is being held over a clay pot containing water from a spring, that is, fresh water. ⁶Then the priest will dip the other bird, along with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into that water, which now has blood from the bird that was killed. ⁷Then he must sprinkle some of the water and blood on the person who was healed. He must sprinkle it on him seven times. Then he will declare that the person is permitted to be with other people again. And the priest will release the other bird and allow it to fly away.

⁸Then the person who was healed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe. After he does those things, he is allowed to return to the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. ⁹On the seventh day, he must again shave off all his hair, including his beard and his eyebrows. Then he must again wash his clothes and bathe. After he does those things, he will be allowed to be with other people again.

¹⁰The next day that person must bring two male lambs and one female lamb; the female lamb must be one year old, and the animals must have no defects. He must also bring about six and one-half liters of a fine flour offering, mixed with olive oil, to be an offering, and about one-third liter of olive oil. ¹¹The priest who declared that the person's skin disease has ended must bring that person and his offerings to Yahweh at the entrance to the sacred tent.

¹²Then the priest must take one of the male lambs and lift it high, along with the olive oil, to show that he is giving this to Yahweh as a guilt offering—because the sick person was not able to give to Yahweh the things that he was required to give him. ¹³Then the priest must slaughter the lamb in the special place where the priests kill the other sacrifices as well. Like the offering to enable people to be forgiven, God considers this guilt offering to be very special, and so the meat from it belongs to the priest. ¹⁴The priest must take some of that animal's blood and put it

on person's right earlobe, on his right thumb, and on his right big toe. ¹⁵Then the priest must take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ¹⁶Then he must dip his right forefinger into that oil and sprinkle it in front of Yahweh seven times. ¹⁷Next, the priest must put some of that oil in his hand on the person's right earlobe, on his right thumb, and on his right big toe. He must put the oil in those three places, exactly where he has already put the blood. ¹⁸The priest must put what is left of the oil in his hand onto the person's head; this will show that Yahweh has forgiven that person's sins.

¹⁹Then the priest must slaughter the female lamb that the person brought; this will be the offering for the person's sins, so that Yahweh will forgive him. After that, the priest will slaughter the second male lamb and burn it whole on the altar. ²⁰He will also burn on the altar the offering made from flour, along with the whole burnt offering. Then the person will be acceptable in the camp; he will be allowed to be with the other people.

²¹But if the person has gotten well is poor and cannot afford to bring all those animals, he must bring to the priest one male lamb for the priest to lift it up and offer it to Yahweh. This will be a sacrifice because the sick person was not able to give to Yahweh the things that he was required to give him. He must also bring about two liters of flour offering mixed with about one-third liter of olive oil; this will be an offering made from flour. He must also bring about one-third liter of olive oil. ²²He must also bring two doves or two pigeons, one for Yahweh to forgive him for the sins he has committed, and one for the priest to burn completely on the altar.

²³On that same day, the eighth day, that person must take those things to the priest at the entrance to the sacred tent, to offer them to Yahweh. ²⁴Then the priest will take the lamb for the guilt offering and the olive oil, and he will raise them up as an offering to Yahweh and present them to him. ²⁵Then the priest will slaughter that lamb and catch some of the blood in a bowl. He will take some of the blood and put it onto the person's right earlobe, his right thumb, and his right big toe. ²⁶Then the priest must take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ²⁷Then he must dip his right forefinger into that oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle it in front of Yahweh seven times. ²⁸He must put some of the oil in his palm on exactly the same places where he put the blood. ²⁹He must put the rest of the oil that is in his hand on the head of the person who has gotten well. This will show that Yahweh has forgiven that person's sins. ³⁰Then the priest must sacrifice the doves or young pigeons, whichever kind that person has brought. ³¹One will be a sin offering and the other will be completely burned on the altar, along with the offering made from flour. By doing that, the priest will atone for that person's sins.

³²These are the regulations for anyone who has a contagious skin disease and who is poor and cannot afford the usual offerings, in order that he can be with people again."

³³Yahweh also said to Aaron and Moses, ³⁴"I am about to give you the land of Canaan to belong to your people permanently. When you enter that land, there will be times when I cause mildew to appear inside one of your houses. ³⁵If that happens, the owner of that house must go to the priest and tell him, 'There is something in my house that looks like mildew.' ³⁶Then the priest will say to him, 'Take everything out of the house before I enter it to examine the mildew. If you do not do that, I will declare that everything in the house is contaminated.' ³⁷After the owner takes everything outside of his house, the priest will go in and inspect the house. If the mildew has caused greenish or reddish spots on the walls that seem to be deeper than only on the surface of the walls, ³⁸the priest will go outside of the house and lock it up for seven days. ³⁹On the seventh day, he must go into the house and inspect it again. If the mildew on the walls has spread, ⁴⁰the priest will tell someone to tear out all the stones in the walls that have mildew on them and throw in the dump outside the town. ⁴¹Then the owner must scrape all the walls inside the house, and everything that is scraped off must be thrown into a dump outside the town. ⁴²Then the owner must get new stones to replace the ones that had mildew on them, and take new clay and plaster to cover the stones in the walls of the house.

⁴³If the mildew appears again in the house after that is done, ⁴⁴the priest must go and examine the house again. If the mildew has spread inside the house, it will be clear that the mildew is the kind that destroys houses, and no one will be allowed to live in it. ⁴⁵It must be completely torn down—the stones, the timber and the plaster—and all those things must be thrown into a dump outside the town.

⁴⁶Anyone who goes into that house while it is locked up will not be allowed to be with other people until sunset of that day. ⁴⁷Anyone who sleeps in that house or eats in that house during that time must wash his clothes.

⁴⁸But when the priest comes to examine the house after it has been plastered, if the mildew has not spread, he will declare that people may live in it, because the mildew is gone. ⁴⁹But before people are allowed to live in it, the priest must take two birds, some cedar wood, some red yarn, and some hyssop. ⁵⁰He must kill one of the birds while holding it over a clay pot containing water taken from a spring. ⁵¹Then he must take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the red bird, and dip them into the blood of the dead bird, and sprinkle some of that blood and water on the house seven times. ⁵²By doing all those things he will enable the house to be fit for the owner to live in again. ⁵³Then he must release the other bird and allow it to fly away. By doing that, he will finish the ritual for causing the house to be acceptable for people to live in it again.

⁵⁴Those are the regulations for contagious diseases, for itching sores, ⁵⁵for mildew on clothes or in a house, ⁵⁶and for swellings, rashes, or bright spots on sores; ⁵⁷these regulations will determine whether people will still be permitted to touch those things or not."

Chapter 15

¹Yahweh also said to Moses and Aaron, ²"Tell this to the Israelites: When an unusual, infected fluid comes out of a man's private parts, no one should touch that man. ³Whether that fluid is blocked or continues to drip, no one should touch him.

⁴No one should touch any bed that such a man lies on, nor anything he sits on. ⁵Anyone who touches that person's bed must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening. ⁶Anyone who sits on something that man has sat on must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening.

⁷Anyone who touches such a man must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening.

⁸If such a man spits on someone else, that person must allow no one to touch him. He must wash his clothes, and he must allow no one to touch him until evening.

⁹Everything that a man who has such a flow of fluid sits on while he is riding a horse or a donkey should not be touched. ¹⁰Anyone who touches a seat or saddle that he was sitting on also should allow no one to touch him until that evening. And anyone who picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe, and no one should touch him until that evening. ¹¹If the person with the flow of fluid wishes to touch someone else, he must first rinse his hands in water; if he touches anyone without doing that first, the one he touched must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening.

¹²If such a man touches a clay pot, someone must break it. Anything made from wood that he touches—someone must rinse it in water.

¹³If such a man gets well from his flow of fluid, he must wait for seven days. Then he must wash his clothes and bathe in water from a spring or stream. Then he will be able to be with others. ¹⁴On the eighth day, he must take two doves or two pigeons and come in front of Yahweh at the entrance of the sacred tent, and give them to the priest. ¹⁵The priest will sacrifice them. One bird will be an offering for the man's sin, and the priest will completely burn the other one on the altar. Then the man will be pure again and acceptable to Yahweh.

¹⁶When semen accidentally flows from a man's private parts, he must bathe his whole body, and no one may touch him until that evening. ¹⁷Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed, and no one may touch it until that evening. ¹⁸When a man has slept with a woman and gives her semen, both of them must bathe, and no one may touch them until that evening.

¹⁹When a woman has her menstrual period, no one may touch her for seven days. If anyone touches her during that time, no one may touch the person who touched her until that evening. ²⁰No one may touch anything that she lies on or sits on during that time. ²¹Anyone who touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe, and no one may touch that person until that evening. ²²⁻²³Anyone who touches something that she has been sitting on, a bed or anything else, must wash his clothes, and no one may touch that person until that evening.

²⁴If a man sleeps with a woman during that time and some of her menstrual blood touches him, no one may touch him for seven days, and no one may touch the bed that he has lain on.

²⁵If a woman has a flow of blood for many days, a flow that is not her normal menstrual flow of blood, or if her flow of blood continues after her menstrual flow ends, no one may touch her until it stops. ²⁶And no one may touch the bed that she lies on or anything that she sits on while that flow of blood continues, just as during her normal menstrual period. ²⁷Anyone who touches those things must not touch anyone else. He must wash his clothes and bathe, and he may not touch anyone else until that evening.

²⁸If the woman is healed of her flow of blood, she must wait seven days before she touches anyone. ²⁹On the eighth day, she must take two doves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the sacred tent. ³⁰The priest must sacrifice one of them as an offering for her sins, and he must completely burn the other one on the altar. Then she will be pure again and acceptable to Yahweh.

³¹You must do these things in order that the people, at the times when they are unacceptable to me, do not defile my sacred tent, where I live among them. For it they do defile it, they will die.

³²Those are the regulations for a man who has a discharge from his body, or who has an emission of semen, when that happens he is unclean; ³³and for any woman during her menstrual period, and for any man who sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period.”

Chapter 16

¹After the two sons of Aaron died because they burned incense to Yahweh in a manner that was contrary to what he had commanded, Yahweh spoke to Moses. ²He said to him, “Tell your brother Aaron not to go into the very holy place, which is inside the inmost curtain, where the sacred chest and its lid are, and where I am present in the cloud that is over it. If Aaron goes in that room when it is not the proper time, he will die!

³When Aaron enters the very holy place in the sacred tent, he must bring a bull that will be killed to become an offering for sins, and a ram to be killed to be an offering that the priests will burn whole on the altar. ⁴Then Aaron must bathe his whole body and put on the linen underwear and the linen tunic. He must tie the linen sash around his waist and wrap the turban around his head. These are his sacred garments. ⁵The Israelite people must then bring to him two male goats to be killed as an offering for sin, and a ram to be killed and burned whole on the altar.

⁶Aaron must offer the bull to me to be a sacrifice in order that I will forgive his sins and his family's sins. ⁷Then he must bring the two male goats to me at the entrance to the sacred tent. ⁸He must cast lots to determine which goat will be sacrificed to me and which will be the goat that he will set free. ⁹Aaron must bring to me the goat that was chosen to be sacrificed. It will be an offering for the people's sins. ¹⁰Aaron must also bring to me the other goat. But it is not to be killed. It will be freed while it is still alive. When Aaron sends it into the wilderness, I will forgive the people's sins.

¹¹Then Aaron must bring the young bull to me, for it to be an offering for himself and for his family. He must slaughter that bull to be an offering for their sins, and he must drain the blood into a basin. ¹²Then he must take some burning coals from the bronze altar and put them into the incense burner. Then he must fill his hands with fragrant, finely ground incense. Then he must take the incense and the incense burner inside the curtain into the very holy place, in the sacred tent. ¹³In the presence of Yahweh, he must put the incense on the burning coals. And a cloud of burning incense will rise up over the lid of the sacred chest. If he obeys these instructions, he will not die

when he presents these offerings to Yahweh. ¹⁴Then Aaron must dip his finger into the basin and sprinkle some blood on the lid of the sacred chest, and also sprinkle some blood seven times against the front of the chest.

¹⁵Aaron must then go outside the sacred tent and slaughter the goat, for it to be an offering for the sins of the people. Then he must bring its blood into the very holy place behind the curtain. There he must sprinkle some of that blood on the lid of the sacred chest and against the front of the chest, as he did with the bull's blood. ¹⁶By doing that, he will purify the very holy place. And he must sprinkle more of the blood on the sacred tent, because I am present where the tent is, in the midst of the camp of the Israelite people, who have become unacceptable to me because of their sins. ¹⁷When Aaron goes into the very holy place in the sacred tent to purify it, no one else is permitted to enter the other part of the sacred tent. Only after Aaron has performed rituals to enable me to forgive him and his family, and all the Israelite people, is any priest permitted to enter the sacred tent.

¹⁸Then Aaron must go outside the tent to purify my altar. He must do this by smearing some of the blood from the bull and some of the blood from the goat on each of the projections at the corners of the altar. ¹⁹Then Aaron must dip his finger into the basin of blood and sprinkle some of the blood over the altar seven times. By doing that, he will separate the altar from the Israelites' deeds that are unacceptable to me. The altar will be set apart for me.

²⁰When Aaron has finished purifying the very holy place inside the sacred tent and all of the sacred tent and the altar, he must bring the goat that was chosen to be set free. ²¹He must put both of his hands on the goat's head and confess all the sins of the Israelite people. By doing that, he will put the guilt of their sins on the goat's head. Then he must give the goat to a man who is chosen, and that man will send the goat out into the wilderness. ²²I will view the goat as carrying away into the wilderness the guilt for all the sins that the people have committed.

²³When Aaron leaves the very holy place and goes into the other part of the sacred tent, he must take off the linen clothes that he had put on; he must leave those special clothes there. ²⁴Then he must bathe in a sacred place, put on his regular clothes, and sacrifice the animals that he will burn whole on the altar, for his own sins and for the sins of the Israelite people. Then Yahweh will forgive their sins. ²⁵He must also burn on the altar all the fat of the two animals that were sacrificed.

²⁶After the man who was to lead the goat into the wilderness has done that and set it free, then he must return, wash his clothes, and bathe himself. Then he may enter the camp again. ²⁷The carcasses of the bull and the goat that were slaughtered as an offering for the people's sins, to make atonement for them, must be carried outside the camp and burned. The hides of these animals, their inner organs, and their dung must be burned. ²⁸The man who burns those things must then wash his clothes and bathe before he comes back into the camp.

²⁹On the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day that I have appointed, you all must fast and not do any work. This is a rule that you must always obey—all you native born Israelites and all the foreigners living among you.

³⁰On that day, Aaron will perform rituals to enable me to forgive you all, and then I will free you all from the guilt of all your sins. ³¹That will be a day for you to rest and not do any work, like the Sabbath days, and you must fast all that day. That is a permanent command for you all to obey. ³²The priest who is anointed with olive oil and set apart from others to serve Yahweh, he will offer a sacrifice, put on linen clothes that are set apart for the honor of God, ³³and offer sacrifices. He will do this to purify the very holy place, all of the sacred tent, the altar, the priests, and all the Israelites, as Aaron did. ³⁴This will be a permanent command for you to obey once every year, to enable me to forgive you Israelite people for the sins that you have committed."

Moses obeyed all the instructions that Yahweh had given to him.

Chapter 17

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the other Israelites. Tell them that I am giving them the following commands: ³If you sacrifice an ox, a lamb, or a goat, you must bring it to the priest at the entrance to the area of the sacred tent, so that he may present it to me there. ⁴If you slaughter it anywhere else as

a sacrifice, whether in the camp or outside of it, you will be guilty of shedding its blood in an unacceptable place. If you do that, you will no longer be allowed to be with Yahweh's people. ⁵Yahweh is telling you to do this so that you will no longer offer sacrifices in the open fields; instead, you must offer them to him in the proper manner: By taking them to the priest at the entrance to the area of the sacred tent, to be offerings to promise friendship with him. ⁶After the priest slaughters the animal, he must sprinkle some of its blood against the altar at the entrance to the sacred tent, and burn its fat for an aroma that is pleasing to Yahweh. ⁷You people must no longer give sacrifices to the images that resemble goats. You people must obey this command for all time."

⁸Yahweh also said this to Moses: "Tell Aaron and his sons to tell the people that if any Israelite or any foreigner living among them brings an offering for a priest to burn whole on the altar, or if he brings any other sacrifice, ⁹but if he does not bring it to the entrance of the sacred tent area as be a sacrifice to me, that person will no longer be allowed to be with my people.

¹⁰I will reject any Israelite or any foreigner who is living among you who consumes the blood of any animal, and he will no longer be allowed to associate with my people. ¹¹That is because the life of every animal is in its blood. I have declared that it is blood that is to be offered on the altar, so that I will forgive people their sins. ¹²That is why I say that neither you Israelites, nor any foreigner living among you, may consume any blood.

¹³If any of you Israelites or any foreigner who is living among you goes hunting and kills an animal or bird that I allow you to eat, you must drain out its blood onto the ground and cover it with earth. ¹⁴This is because the life of every creature is in its blood. That is why I have said to you Israelites that anyone who consumes blood from an animal must no longer be allowed to associate with my people.

¹⁵If any of you Israelites or any foreigner who is living among you eats any meat from an animal that died or that was killed by wild animals, you must wash your clothes and bathe. Then you must not touch anyone else until that evening. ¹⁶If you do not obey this rule, I will certainly punish you."

Chapter 18

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"Speak to the Israelite people and tell them that I, Yahweh, say this, 'I am Yahweh, your God. ³After seeing how the Egyptians behaved, among whom you also lived, you must not do what they did. And you must not behave as the Canaanites live, into whose land I am taking you. You must avoid their practices. ⁴You must obey all of my laws; you must do everything that I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you. ⁵If you obey all my decrees and laws, you will continue to remain alive for a long time. I, Yahweh, am promising you this. Here are some of my laws.

⁶Do not sleep with any of your close relatives. It is I, Yahweh, who am commanding that.

⁷Do not disgrace your father by sleeping with your mother. Do not disgrace your mother in this manner.

⁸Do not sleep with any of your father's other wives, because that would disgrace your father.

⁹Do not sleep with either your full sister or half-sister. It does not matter whether she was born and raised in your house or somewhere else.

¹⁰Do not sleep with your granddaughter, because that would disgrace you.

¹¹Do not sleep with your half-sister, one whose father is also your father; she is your sister.

¹²Do not sleep with your father's sister, because she is your father's close relative.

¹³Do not sleep with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

¹⁴Do not disgrace your father's brother by sleeping with his wife, because she is your aunt.

- ¹⁵Do not sleep with your daughter-in-law, because she is your son's wife.
- ¹⁶Do not sleep with your brother's wife, because that would disgrace your brother.
- ¹⁷Do not sleep with the daughter or granddaughter of any woman with whom you have previously slept. They are her close relatives. Sleeping with any of them would be an evil thing to do.
- ¹⁸While your wife is still living, do not marry your wife's sister and sleep with her.
- ¹⁹Do not sleep with any woman while she is having her menstrual period.
- ²⁰Do not defile yourself by sleeping with someone else's wife.
- ²¹Do not give any of your children to be burned to be as a sacrifice to the god Molech, because that would dishonor me, Yahweh, your God.
- ²²No man should sleep with another man. That is detestable.
- ²³No one, man or woman, should defile himself by sleeping with an animal. That is a perverse action.
- ²⁴Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because doing these things is how the people of the nations became unacceptable to me, the people groups that I will drive out as you advance into the land that I am giving you. ²⁵They even caused the land to become defiled, so I punished them for their sins, and it was as though the land had vomited out the people who lived there. ²⁶But you must all obey my laws and decrees. This includes both you people who were born here and the foreigners who live among you. ²⁷As for all those detestable things, before you came, the people who lived in this land did them, and they defiled the land. ²⁸So if you also defile the land, I will get rid of you as I got rid of the people of those nations that were here before you came.
- ²⁹You must not allow people who do any of those detestable things to associate with you, who are my people.
- ³⁰Obey all that I command you to do, and do not defile yourselves by following any of the disgusting habits of the people who were there before you came. I, Yahweh your God, am the one who is commanding these things."

Chapter 19

- ¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"Speak to all the people of Israel and tell them this: 'You must be holy, because Yahweh your God is holy, and he wants you to be like him.
- ³Each of you must respect your father and your mother. And you must honor the Sabbath days. It is Yahweh, your God, who is commanding you to do these things.
- ⁴Do not worship idols, which are worth nothing, or make metal statues of gods for yourselves. Yahweh is your God; it is he who is telling you this. He is the only one you must worship.
- ⁵Yahweh also says this: 'When you bring an offering to promise friendship with me, offer it in a way that I will accept. ⁶The meat should be eaten on the day that you sacrifice it, but you may eat some of it on the next day. However, you must burn anything that remains until the third day. ⁷For any of it to be eaten on the third day is very displeasing to me, and I will not accept that offering. ⁸I will punish anyone who eats it after the second day, because he will have not respected what I say is holy. And that person must no longer be allowed to associate with my people.
- ⁹When you harvest your grain, leave the grain standing at the edges of the field and in the corners. Do not pick up the sheaves that have fallen to the ground. ¹⁰And when you harvest your grapes, do not go back a second time to try to harvest some more, and do not pick up the grapes that have fallen on the ground. Leave those things for the poor people and for foreigners who are living among you. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you those things.

¹¹Do not steal anything.

Do not tell lies.

Do not deceive each other.

¹²Do not call upon me to punish you if you say something that you know is false. If you do this, you will dishonor me. Do not forget that I am Yahweh, your God.

¹³Do not cheat anyone or steal from anyone.

If you have agreed to pay your workers at the end of the day, do what you have promised. Do not keep those wages until the next day.

¹⁴Do not curse deaf people, and do not put things in the path of blind people to cause them to stumble. I, Yahweh, am commanding this.

¹⁵Always judge people fairly. Do not do special favors for either poor people or rich people.

¹⁶Do not spread false rumors about other people.

Do not remain silent in court if your testimony would keep an innocent person being executed. I, Yahweh, am commanding this.

¹⁷Do not hate anyone. Instead, honestly rebuke others who ought to be rebuked, in order that you also will not be guilty.

¹⁸Do not try to get revenge against someone or be angry with someone for a long time. Instead, love other people like you love yourself. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding this.

¹⁹Obey my laws.

Do not allow two different kinds of animals to mate with each other.

Do not plant two different kinds of seed in the same field.

Do not wear clothing made from two different kinds of material.

²⁰If a man sleeps with a slave woman who has been promised to marry some other man, but if she has not been bought by that man and is still a slave, these two people must be punished. But because she was still a slave, she and the man who slept with her must not be executed. ²¹However, that man must bring a ram to be slaughtered at the entrance of the sacred tent area, to be an offering in order that he no longer be guilty for his sin. ²²The priest will offer that ram to me. Then I will forgive that man for the sin which he committed.

²³When you enter the land that I have promised to give to you, and when you plant various kinds of fruit trees, you must not eat any of their fruit for three years. ²⁴In the fourth year you must set aside all of their fruit to belong to me; you must set it apart as holy, an offering to give me praise. ²⁵But in the fifth year, you will be permitted to eat their fruit. If you do that, your trees will produce much fruit. I, Yahweh your God, am promising that.

²⁶Do not eat any meat that still has the animal's blood in it.

Do not consult spirits to find out what will happen in the future, and do not practice sorcery.

²⁷Do not shave the hair at the sides of your heads as pagan people do.

²⁸Do not cut your bodies when you are mourning for people who have died, and do not put tattoos on your bodies. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding this.

²⁹Do not disgrace your daughters by forcing them to become prostitutes. If you cause them to become prostitutes, soon the land will be filled with prostitutes and all other kinds of people's wicked behavior.

³⁰Honor my Sabbath days and revere my sacred tent, because I am Yahweh.

³¹Do not seek advice from those who try to get the spirits of dead people give them advice. If you do that, I will no longer accept you. I am Yahweh your God.

³²Stand up when old people enter the room, and show that you respect them. You must also honor me, your God; that is who I am.

³³When foreigners live among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴You must treat them like you treat your fellow citizens. Love them as you love yourselves, and do not forget that once when you were foreigners in Egypt you were badly mistreated by the people of Egypt. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you to do this.

³⁵When you are measuring things, to see how long they are or how much they weigh or how many there are, ³⁶use correct measuring sticks and scales and weights on the scales and measuring baskets and other measuring containers. I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

³⁷Obey carefully all my laws and decrees. It is I, Yahweh, who am commanding you these things."

Chapter 20

¹Yahweh also said this to Moses: ²"Tell the Israelite people, 'Any Israelite or any foreigner who is living in Israel who sacrifices any of his children as an offering to the idol Molech must die. The people of the town must kill him by throwing stones at him. ³I will reject such people and cause them to no longer be with my people because he has given his child to Molech, so as to defile my holy place and profane my holy name. ⁴If the people of that man's town ignore it when he kills any of his children to offer him to Molech, and if they do not execute that person, ⁵I myself will punish that person and his clan. I will command that he must no longer be with my people. And I will do the same thing to any others who are unfaithful to me and who worship Molech.

⁶I will reject those who go to those who consult the spirits of dead people, or who go to fortune tellers who ask spirits to advise them. I will reject such people; they will no longer be with my own people.

⁷Set yourselves apart for my honor, so that you may belong to me, because I am Yahweh your God. ⁸Carefully obey everything that I have commanded you. I am Yahweh, the one who sets you apart from the other peoples so that I am honored.

⁹If anyone curses his father or his mother, you must execute him. He himself will be responsible for his own death.

¹⁰If a man commits adultery with some other man's wife, then you must execute both of them, the man and the woman. They have committed adultery.

¹¹If a man sleeps with one of his father's wives, he has dishonored his father. So you must execute both that man and woman; they will be responsible for their own deaths.

¹²If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, you must execute them both. They have exchanged good for evil; they both deserve to die.

¹³If two men have slept together, they have done something detestable. You must execute them both; they will be responsible for their own deaths.

¹⁴If a man marries both a woman and her mother, that is a wicked thing. You must burn all three of them to death, in order that no one among you continues to commit such an evil deed.

¹⁵If a man sleeps with an animal, you must execute both him and that animal.

¹⁶Similarly, if a woman sleeps with an animal, you must execute both her and that animal. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

¹⁷If a man sleeps with his sister, the daughter of either his mother or his father—if they have slept together, that is disgraceful. They will no longer be with my people. Because he has slept with his sister, he is guilty.

¹⁸If a man sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period, they have both revealed her flowing blood, so neither of them must be with my people anymore.

¹⁹No man must sleep with the sister of either his father or his mother, because he would be disgracing someone who is a close relative. You must punish such a man, as well as the woman.

²⁰If a man sleeps with his uncle's wife, he has dishonored his uncle. What for they have done, they must be responsible for their actions. And when they die, their children would be stripped of the rights to any inheritance they would have received from their parents.

²¹If a man marries his brother's wife, it is a sin because he has dishonored his brother's marriage. The rights of inheritance would be stripped away from any children they would have received from their parents.

²²Obey all my decrees and laws carefully, in order that you will not have to leave the land to which I am bringing you. ²³Do not imitate the customs of the people of the land from which I am going to drive them out, as you advance into it. I hate them because they have done all those things. ²⁴But I said to you, "You will take their land from them. I will give it to you to be yours, a land that is very fertile. I am Yahweh your God, who has set you apart from the people of other nations."

²⁵So you must distinguish between birds and animals that are unacceptable to me and those that are acceptable to me. Do not defile yourselves by eating birds or animals, or anything that crawls along on the ground, things that I have said are unacceptable for you. ²⁶You must live as a people who are set apart for my honor, because I, Yahweh, am also set apart and I do everything for my honor. I have taken you out of the other nations, because you are mine.

²⁷You must execute any man or woman among you who consults the spirits of dead people or other spirits. Kill them by throwing stones at them; they will be responsible for their own deaths."

Chapter 21

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, ²You priests must not cause yourselves to become unfit to do my work by touching any dead body. You are permitted to touch only the corpses of close relatives, such as your mother, father, son, daughter or your brother. ³You may also touch the corpse of a sister if she is not married and has been living in your house, because she has no husband to bury her. ⁴You priests must not cause yourselves to become unfit to do my work by touching the dead bodies of other relatives of yours.

⁵You priests must not shave your heads or the edges of your beards; you must not cut your bodies to show that you are mourning for someone who has died. ⁶You must act in ways that I, your God, consider to be suitable for you, my priests; you must not disgrace me. You are the ones who will present to me the offerings that you will burn. These offerings will be made to me from your food supplies. So you must act in ways that are suitable, because you honor me.

⁷You priests must not marry women who have been prostitutes or who have been divorced from their husbands, because you priests are set apart for God. ⁸You must remember that I have set you apart to worship me. It is as though you were offering food to me, your God. Regard yourselves as belonging to me, because I, Yahweh, am the one who made you to be priests, and I have nothing to do with any evil—I am holy.

⁹If a priest's daughter becomes a prostitute, she disgraces her father, and you must burn her in a fire.

¹⁰The high priest is the one among his relatives who has been appointed for that work by having his head anointed with olive oil. He is also the one who has been appointed to wear the garments that are made and set apart for the honor of Yahweh. He must not allow the hair on his head to remain uncombed, and he must not tear his clothes when he is mourning for someone. ¹¹He must not enter any place where there is a corpse. He must not do that and cause himself to become unfit for his work, even if it is his father or his mother who has died. ¹²He must not leave the sacred tent to join those who are mourning, because he would cause himself to become unfit for his work and would also defile the sacred tent. He must not leave the sacred tent at that time, because by being anointed with olive oil he has been appointed to serve his God in the sacred tent. I, Yahweh, am the one who am commanding this.

¹³Women whom you priests marry must be virgins. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵You priests must not marry widows or prostitutes or divorced women, because if you do that, and if you later have sons, they will not be acceptable to be priests among your people. You must marry only virgins from among your own people. I am Yahweh, who sets priests apart for my honor and for those who worship me.”

¹⁶Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁷“Say this to Aaron: ‘For all future time, none of your descendants who has any defects on his body will be allowed to come near the altar to offer sacrifices to me which will be like my food. ¹⁸No one who is blind or lame or deformed, or whose face is disfigured, ¹⁹no man with a crippled foot or a crippled hand, ²⁰no man who has a hunchback or an abnormally short person, no man whose eyes are defective, no man who has a skin disease or whose private parts have been damaged. ²¹No descendant of Aaron, the first high priest, who has any defect is allowed to come to the altar to offer to me, his God, sacrifices that will be burned. ²²Priests who have defects are permitted to eat the various kinds of holy food offered to me. ²³But because of their defects, they must not go near the curtain in the sacred tent or near the altar, because if they did that, they would desecrate my sacred tent. I am Yahweh, the one who sets those places apart for myself and for my honor.”

²⁴So Moses told this to Aaron and to his sons and to all the Israelite people.

Chapter 22

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²“Explain to Aaron and his sons about when they should not touch or eat any food that the people have dedicated to me by giving it as a sacrifice. They must not dishonor me or my name. I am Yahweh.

³Tell them that for all future time, if they or any of their descendants become unfit for any reason to do the work that priests must do, they must not go near anything the people of Israel have dedicated to me as an offering. Anyone who violates this rule will no longer be part of my people. I am Yahweh.

⁴If any descendant of Aaron has a contagious skin disease or a discharge from his private parts, he is not allowed to eat any of the sacred offerings until he is cured. He will also be unfit for his work if he touches anything that has touched a corpse, or if he touches anyone who has an emission of semen, ⁵or if he touches anything that crawls on the ground, or if he touches any person who causes him to be unfit for his work. ⁶Any priest who touches anything unclean will be unclean until evening. He must not eat any of the holy things, unless he first washes his body with water. ⁷After the sun sets, he may eat food from the sacred offerings, because they are now his food that is to be eaten. ⁸But he must not eat anything that has died a natural death or that has been killed by wild animals, because if he did that, he would be unfit to work for me. I, Yahweh, am commanding those things.

⁹The priests must obey my commandments; they must not despise them, or they will become guilty and die. I am Yahweh, the one who sets them apart for my honor.

¹⁰No one who does not belong to a priest's family is permitted to eat from the sacred offering. No one who is visiting the priest, or one that has been hired by the priest, none of them is permitted to eat it. ¹¹But if a priest

buys a slave, or if a slave is born in his house, that slave is permitted to eat such food. ¹²If a priest's daughter marries a man who is not a priest, she is no longer permitted to eat the sacred foods that were given to Yahweh as gifts or offerings. ¹³But suppose that a priest's daughter who has no children becomes a widow or becomes divorced, and suppose also that she returns to her father's house to live there as she did when she was young. In that case, she may eat the same food that her father eats. But no other person is permitted to eat any of it.

¹⁴If anyone who is not permitted to eat a sacred offering eats it without realizing that it is sacred, he must pay the priest for the food and add an extra one-fifth to it. ¹⁵When the priests bring offerings to me, the sacred offerings that the Israelite people bring to them, they must not treat those offerings as though they were not special to me; ¹⁶the people must not allow anyone who is not a priest to eat any of those offerings. If they did that, they would become guilty. I am Yahweh, the one who sets the Israelite people apart from other people and makes them holy for my honor."

¹⁷Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁸"Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelite people and tell them that I say this to them, 'If any of you Israelites or foreigners who live in Israel brings to me an animal that will be completely burned on the altar, either as a result of a solemn promise that you made to me or to be an offering that is given voluntarily, ¹⁹you must bring from your cattle or sheep or goats an animal that has no defects, in order that I may accept it. ²⁰Do not bring any animals that have defects, because I will not accept them for you. ²¹Similarly, when someone brings from his cattle or sheep or goats an offering to promise friendship with me, either to fulfill a promise that he made to me or to be a voluntary offering—for me to accept it, it must have no defects or blemishes. ²²Do not offer to me animals that are blind or injured or maimed, or any animal that has warts or a festering sore. ²³You may present to me to be a voluntary offering an ox or a sheep that is injured or stunted, but it will not be accepted to fulfill a promise made to me. ²⁴You must not offer to me animals whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not present these kind of damaged animals as offerings to Yahweh anywhere in the land where you live, ²⁵and you must not accept such animals that are sold to you by a foreigner. You must not offer them to me as food for me. Such animals will not be accepted by me, because they are deformed or have defects.'"

²⁶Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁷"When a calf or lamb or goat is born, it must remain with its mother for seven days. After that, it can be accepted to be an offering to me that will be burned. ²⁸Do not slaughter a cow or a sheep and its newborn young on the same day.

²⁹When you sacrifice an animal to thank me for what I have done, sacrifice it in a way that I will accept. ³⁰The meat must be eaten on that day. Do not leave any of it until the next morning. I, Yahweh, am the one who is commanding this.

³¹Obey all my commands. I, Yahweh, am commanding them. ³²Do not dishonor me by disobeying them. You Israelite people must acknowledge that I, Yahweh, am holy, and I am the one who causes you to be holy. ³³And I am the one who brought you out of Egypt in order that I, Yahweh, will be your God."

Chapter 23

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Tell the Israelites about the festivals for Yahweh, the days when you all must gather together in holy assemblies on set times each year, as festivals in which you worship me.

³You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day you must not do any work. You must rest. It is a sacred day when you must gather together to worship me. Wherever you live, you must rest on that day.

⁴There are festivals that I am establishing for you. These will be sacred days when you must gather together to worship me. ⁵The first festival is the Passover. That festival will begin at twilight on the appointed day each spring and end the following day. ⁶The next day will begin the Festival of Bread with no Yeast. That festival will continue for seven days. During that time, the bread that you eat must be made without yeast. ⁷On the first day of that

festival, all of you must stop your regular work and gather together to worship me. ⁸On each of the seven days, you must present to me several animals as an offering to be completely burned on the altar. On the seventh day, all of you must again stop your regular work and gather to worship me."

⁹Yahweh also told Moses ¹⁰to tell the Israelite people about other festivals. He said, "After you arrive in the land which I am giving to you, and when you harvest your crops for the first time there, bring to the priest some of the first grain that you harvest. ¹¹On the day after the next Sabbath day, the priest will lift it up high to dedicate it to me, in order that I may accept it as your gift. ¹²On that same day you must sacrifice to me a one year old male lamb that has no defects. You must burn it on the altar. ¹³You must also burn a flour offering. That offering must consist of four and one-half liters of good flour, ground grain, mixed with olive oil. The smell of those things burning will be very pleasing to me. Along with that, you must also offer one liter of wine, which will be a liquid offering. ¹⁴Do not eat any bread or any roasted or unroasted grain on that day until after you have brought those offerings to me, your God. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live.

¹⁵Count seven weeks and one day after the priest offers that bundle of grain to me. ¹⁶Then on the day after the seventh Sabbath, each family must bring to me an offering from the new crop of grain. ¹⁷From your homes, bring two loaves of bread to the priest. He will lift them up high to dedicate them as an offering to me. Those loaves must be baked from four and one-half liters of good flour that has yeast mixed with it. That bread will be an offering to me from the first wheat that you harvest each year. ¹⁸Along with this bread, you must present to me seven one year old lambs with no defects, one young bull, and two rams. They must all be completely burned on the altar. All those offerings, with the flour offering and the wine offering, will be burned, and the smell of all those things burning will be very pleasing to me. ¹⁹Then you must also kill one male goat as an offering for your sins, and two one year old male lambs to be an offering for you to promise friendship with me. ²⁰The priest will lift up these offerings high to dedicate them to me. He will also offer the loaves of bread that were baked from the first wheat that you harvest. Those offerings are special to me; but they are for the priest. ²¹On that day, you must stop your regular work and gather to worship me. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live.

²²When you harvest the grain in your fields, do not harvest what is along the edges of the fields, and do not pick up the grain that the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor people and for the foreigners who are living among you. Do not forget that it is I, Yahweh your God, who am commanding those things!"

²³Yahweh also told Moses ²⁴to give these instructions to the Israelite people: "Each year in the seventh month, on the first day of that month, all of you must celebrate that day, on which you will completely rest. You must not do any work on that day. When the priests blow their trumpets loudly, you all must gather together as a holy assembly, to worship me. ²⁵All of you must not do any regular work on that day. Instead, you must present offerings to me that will be burned on the altar."

²⁶Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁷"You must celebrate a day on which you request that I forgive you for the sins that you have committed. That day will be nine days after the festival when the priests blow the trumpets. On that day you must not eat. You must gather together to worship me and present offerings to me that will be burned on the altar. ²⁸You must not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when the priests will offer sacrifices to me to atone for your sins. ²⁹You must drive out from the people anyone who does not go without eating on that day. ³⁰I will get rid of anyone who does any kind of work on that day. ³¹You must not work at all! You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live. ³²That day will be a day of complete rest for all of you, and on that day you must fast to show that you are sorry for having sinned. That day of rest and going without food will begin on the evening before the day in which you ask me to forgive you for your sins, and it will end on the evening of the following day."

³³Yahweh also said to Moses, ³⁴"Tell the Israelite people that each year they must also celebrate the Festival of Shelters. That festival will begin five days after the Day of Atonement. This festival will last for seven days. ³⁵On the first day of that festival, the people must gather together to worship me, and they must not do any regular work.

³⁶On each of the seven days of this festival, they must present to me an offering of animals that will be burned on

the altar. On the eighth day, they must gather again as a holy assembly to worship me and present to me another animal that will be burned on the altar. That also will be a sacred gathering, and they must not work on that day, either.

³⁷To summarize, those are the festivals that I have appointed. Celebrate these festivals by gathering together to present to me all the various offerings that will be burned on the altar—animals that will be burned completely, and offerings of flour, offerings to promise friendship with me, and offerings of wine. Each offering must be brought on the day that I have indicated. ³⁸You must celebrate these festivals in addition to worshipping me on the Sabbath days. And you must give me all those offerings in addition to the offerings that people personally decide to give, and in addition to the offerings that people make to accompany the solemn promises that they have made.

³⁹Returning to my instructions about the Festival of Shelters, you must celebrate this festival after you have harvested all the crops. On the first day and on the last day of that festival, you must rest completely. ⁴⁰But on the first day, you are permitted to pick the best fruit from trees. You will also take branches from the palm trees, leafy branches from other trees, and willow trees near the stream, and make shelters to live in for that week. Then rejoice in my presence for those seven days. ⁴¹You must celebrate this festival for seven days every year. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live. You must celebrate this festival in the seventh month. ⁴²During the seven days of that festival, all of you people who have been Israelites all of your lives must live in shelters. ⁴³This festival will always remind your descendants that their ancestors lived in shelters for many years after I rescued them from Egypt. Do not forget that I, Yahweh your God, am the one who is commanding this."

⁴⁴So Moses gave to the Israelite people all these instructions concerning the festivals that Yahweh wanted them to celebrate each year.

Chapter 24

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"Command the Israelite people to constantly bring you clear oil made from pressed olives to burn in the lamps in the sacred tent, in order that those lamps will burn all the time. ³Outside the curtain of the very holy place, Aaron must take care of the lamps in my presence continually, in order that they will burn all during the night. That regulation must be obeyed forever. ⁴The priests must constantly take care of the lamps that burn in my presence.

⁵Also, each week you must take some fine flour and bake twelve very big loaves of bread, using four and one-half liters of flour for each loaf. ⁶Put the loaves in two rows, with six loaves in each row, on the table covered with pure gold, in my presence. ⁷Along each row, place on the gold table some pure incense to be burned as an offering to me instead of the bread. ⁸The priests must put new loaves of bread on the table each Sabbath day, to signify the covenant that will never end, which I have made with you Israelites. ⁹When the loaves are removed from the table, they will belong to Aaron and his sons. They must eat them in a place set aside for this purpose, because they are part of the offerings—the offerings that belong only to me—that are given to me by being burned."

¹⁰⁻¹¹There was a man whose mother's name was Shelomith. She was an Israelite whose father was Dibri from the tribe of Dan. Her son's father was from Egypt. One day this man and another Israelite man started to fight inside the camp. And while they were fighting, that man cursed Yahweh. ¹²So the Israelite people seized him and guarded him until they could find out what Yahweh would reveal to them what they should do to that man.

¹³Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹⁴"Tie up and take outside the camp the man who has cursed me. There all those who heard what he said must put their hands on his head to indicate that he is guilty, and then all the people must kill him by throwing stones at him. ¹⁵Tell the Israelites, 'If anyone curses me, he must endure the consequences.

¹⁶So anyone who curses me must be executed. All the people must throw stones at him. It does not matter if he is a foreigner or an Israelite from birth. Anyone who curses me must be executed.

¹⁷Also, if anyone murders another person, the people must execute him. ¹⁸And anyone who kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed. ¹⁹And if one person injures another person, the injured person is allowed to injure the person who injured him in the same way. ²⁰If someone breaks one of another person's bones, that person is allowed to break one of the bones of the person who injured him. If someone gouges out an eye of another person, that person is allowed to gouge out the eye of the person who injured him. If someone knocks out the tooth of another person, that person is allowed to knock out one of his teeth. What is done to the offender must be the same as what he did to the other person. ²¹Whoever kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed, but the people must execute anyone who murders another person. ²²You Israelites and foreigners who live among you must all have that same law. I, Yahweh your God, am the one who has commanded it."

²³Then Moses told the Israelites what they must do to the man who cursed Yahweh, so they took the man outside the camp and killed him by throwing stones at him. They did what Yahweh commanded Moses to tell them to do.

Chapter 25

¹Yahweh said to Moses on Mount Sinai, ²"Tell the Israelites that Yahweh is giving these commands to them: When you enter the land that he is about to give you, every seventh year you must honor him by not planting any crops. You must allow the ground to rest. ³During six years, you are to plant crops in your fields, prune your grapevines, and harvest your crops. ⁴But during the seventh year you must allow your fields to rest, in order to honor Yahweh. Do not plant seeds in your fields or prune your grapevines during the seventh year. ⁵In the seventh year, you must not bring workers together to harvest whatever grain has grown in your fields; you must not bring workers together to harvest whatever grapes have grown on the vines that you did not cut back. You must allow the land to rest for that one year. ⁶But you are permitted to eat whatever crops have grown by themselves during that year. You and your male and female servants, and workers whom you have hired, and any foreigners who are living among you—you may all eat those things. ⁷And your livestock and the wild animals in your land are permitted to eat them during that year as well.

⁸⁻⁹After every forty-nine years has ended, you must do this for the celebration of Jubilee. On the tenth day of the seventh month of the next year, blow trumpets throughout the country, to announce the Day of Atonement. ¹⁰Set apart that year in order to honor Yahweh. You must proclaim everywhere, to all the people, that this year will be the time for giving the land back to the families that first owned it when Yahweh brought you into your land. It will also be the time for setting free any of Yahweh's people who are slaves. ¹¹This year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year, will be a year in which you must rejoice and obey Yahweh's special instructions. During that year do not plant anything, and do not harvest in your usual manner the crops or grapes that have grown by themselves. ¹²It will be a year for you to rejoice in, the year of Jubilee. You will treat it as special, and eat only what has grown by itself.

¹³In that year of celebration, the year of Jubilee, and everyone must return to their property to the original owner of it.

¹⁴If you sell some of your land to a fellow Israelite or if you buy some land from one of them, you must treat that person fairly. ¹⁵If you buy land, the price that you will pay will depend on the number of years until the next celebration of Jubilee. If someone sells land to you, he will charge a price that reflects the number of years remaining until the next year of celebration of Jubilee, when all property will be returned to their original owners. ¹⁶If there will be many years before the next time for the celebration of Jubilee, the price will be higher. If there will be only a few years until the next year of celebration, the price will be lower. You could say that what he is really selling you is the number of crops you could harvest before the next year of the celebration of Jubilee. ¹⁷Do not cheat each other. Instead, honor Yahweh. It is Yahweh, whom we Israelites worship, who is commanding us to do these things.

¹⁸Obey all my laws carefully. If you do that, you will continue to live safely in your country. ¹⁹The crops will grow well on the land, and you will have plenty to eat. ²⁰But you may ask, "If we do not plant or harvest our crops during

the seventh year, what will we have to eat?" ²¹Yahweh answers you that he will bless you very much during the sixth year, with the result that during that year there will be enough crops to provide food for you for three years.

²²Then, after you plant seed during the eighth year and wait for the crops to grow, you will eat the food grown in the sixth year; you will continue to eat it until you harvest your crops in the ninth year.

²³You must not sell any of your land to belong to someone else permanently, because the land is not yours. It is really mine, and you are only living on it temporarily and farming it for me. ²⁴Throughout the country that you will possess, you must remember that if someone sells some of his land to you, he is permitted to buy it back from you at any time.

²⁵So if one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of his property to you for money, the person who is most closely related to him is permitted to come and buy back that land for him. ²⁶However, if a man has no one to buy the land for him, but if he himself prospers again and has saved enough money to buy that land back, ²⁷he must calculate how many years there will be until the next year of celebration. Then he must pay to the man who bought the land the money that the other man would have earned by growing crops on that land for those years.

²⁸But if the original owner does not have enough money to buy back the land that he sold, it will continue to belong to the man who bought it until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee. In that year he will take possession of it again, and he will be able to farm it again.

²⁹If someone sells a house in a city that has a wall around it, during the next year he will be permitted to buy it back from the man who bought it. ³⁰If he does not buy it during that year, it will belong permanently to the man who bought it, and to that man's descendants. He does not need to return it to the original owner in the year of celebration of Jubilee. ³¹But houses that are in villages without walls are considered to be as though they were in a field. So if someone sells one of those houses, he is permitted to buy it back at any time. And even if he does not buy it, he will take possession of it again at the year of the celebration of Jubilee.

³²The descendants of Levi are a special case, however. If they sell their houses in the cities that belong to them, they are permitted to buy them back at any time. ³³But even if they do not buy back those houses, they will become theirs again in the year of the celebration of Jubilee, because those houses are in their cities, on land that the other Israelites had given to them. ³⁴But the pastureland near their towns must not be sold. It must belong to the original owners permanently.

³⁵If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and is unable to buy what he needs, others of you must help him as you would help a foreigner who is living among you temporarily. ³⁶If you lend money to him, do not charge any kind of interest. Instead, show by what you do that you honor your God; you must help that man, in order that he will be able to continue to live among you. ³⁷If you lend him money, do not charge interest; and if you sell food to him, charge him only what you paid for it. Do not try to make a profit from it. ³⁸Do not forget that it is Yahweh your God who is giving you these commands; it is, after all, Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt to be your God and to give you the land of Canaan.

³⁹If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells himself to you, do not force him to work like a slave.

⁴⁰Treat him as you treat workers whom you hire or like someone who is living on your land temporarily. He must work for you only until the year of the celebration of Jubilee. ⁴¹During that year, you must free him, and he may go back to his family and to the property that his ancestors owned. ⁴²It is as though we Israelites are all Yahweh's slaves, whom he freed from being slaves in Egypt. So none of you should buy each other and make each other into slaves. ⁴³And do not treat the Israelites whom you buy cruelly. Instead, honor Yahweh, our God.

⁴⁴If you want to have slaves, you are permitted to buy them from nearby people groups. ⁴⁵You are also permitted to buy some of the foreigners who are living among you, and members of their clans that were born in your country. You may own them. ⁴⁶They will be your slaves for the remaining years of your life, and after you die, it is permitted for your children to own them. But you must not act in brutal ways toward your fellow Israelites.

⁴⁷Suppose a foreigner who is living among you becomes rich, and if a fellow Israelite becomes poor and sells himself to that foreigner or to a member of his clan, ⁴⁸it is permitted for someone to pay for him to be freed. It is permitted for one of his relatives to pay for him to be released. ⁴⁹An uncle or a cousin or another relative in his clan may pay for him to be released. Or, if he prospers and gets enough money, he is permitted to pay for his own release. ⁵⁰The man who wants to pay for his own release must count the number of years until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee. The price he pays to the man who bought him will depend on the pay that would be given to a hired worker for that number of remaining years. ⁵¹If there are a lot of years that remain until the year of celebration, he must pay for his release a larger amount of the money. ⁵²If there are only a few years that remain until the year of the celebration of Jubilee, he must pay a smaller amount to be released. ⁵³During those years that he is working for the man who bought him, the man who bought him must treat him like he would treat a hired worker, and all of you must make sure that his owner does not treat him cruelly.

⁵⁴And even if a fellow Israelite who has sold himself to a rich man is not able to pay for himself to be freed by any of these ways, he and his children must be freed in the year of the celebration of Jubilee, ⁵⁵because it is as though you Israelites are my slaves, whom I, Yahweh your God, freed from being slaves in Egypt.”

Chapter 26

¹Yahweh also said this to Moses on Mount Sinai, “Do not make idols or set up carved figures or sacred stones to worship as if they were God. And do not put on your property a stone that you have carved so you can bow down to it. You must worship only me, Yahweh, your God.

²Honor the Sabbath days and revere my sacred tent, because I, Yahweh, live there.

³If you carefully obey all my commands, ⁴I will send rain for you at the proper times in order that crops will grow on your land and there will be plenty of fruit on your trees. ⁵You will continue harvesting and threshing grain until it is time to harvest grapes, and you will continue to harvest grapes until it is time to start planting things in the following year. You will have all the food that you want to eat, and you will live safely in your land.

⁶If you obey all my laws, there will be peace in your country, and when you lie down to sleep. Nothing will cause you to be afraid. I will get rid of the dangerous animals in your country, and there will be no wars in your country.

⁷You will pursue your enemies and kill them with your swords. ⁸Five of you will pursue a hundred of them, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand of them and kill them.

⁹If you obey all my laws, I will bless you and cause you to have many children. And I will do what I said that I would do in the covenant that I made with you. ¹⁰When you are still eating food from the harvest from the previous year, it will be necessary for you to throw away some of it to make space to store the new harvest. ¹¹I will live among you in my sacred tent, and I will never reject you. ¹²I will live among you and continue to be your God, and you will continue to be my people. ¹³I am Yahweh your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt in order that you would no longer be slaves of the people of Egypt. When you were there, it was as though you were animals that were pulling plows for the people of Egypt, but I broke the bars of the yokes that they had put around your necks; I made you able to walk with your heads up.

¹⁴But suppose you pay no attention to me; suppose you refuse to obey what I have told you to do. ¹⁵Suppose that you reject my decrees and laws, and do not obey me, but that instead you reject the covenant that I made with you.

¹⁶In that case, these are the things that I will do to you. I will suddenly send disasters that will ruin you. You will have diseases that cannot be cured, and fevers that will cause you to become blind and will slowly kill you. It will be useless for you to plant your fields, because your enemies will eat the crops that grow. ¹⁷I will reject you, so your enemies will conquer you. Then they will rule over you, and you will be so terrified that you will run away even if they do not pursue you.

¹⁸But after all these things happen to you, if you still refuse to obey me, I will continue to punish you again and again for the sins that you have committed. ¹⁹I will punish you so much that you will no longer be stubborn or proud. I will not let any rain fall in your land. It will be as though the sky were made of iron, and the ground were as hard as bronze. ²⁰You will uselessly work very hard to plant seeds, because crops will not grow in the hard soil in your fields, and fruit will not grow on your trees.

²¹If you continue to act against me and refuse to obey me, I will cause you to experience disasters again and again, as you deserve to experience because of your sins. ²²I will send wild animals to attack you, and they will kill your little children and destroy your cattle. There will be very few of you who will remain alive, with the result that there will be very few people traveling about on the roads in your country.

²³When you experience those things that I do to punish you, if you still do not pay attention to me, and if you continue to act against me, ²⁴I myself will act against you, and I will punish you for your sins again and again. ²⁵I will send armies to you to punish you for not doing the things that I commanded you to do in the covenant that I made with you. If you try to escape from your enemies by hiding behind your city walls, I will send plagues to you, and I will allow your enemies to capture you. ²⁶When I destroy your supplies of food, there will be very little flour with which to make bread. As a result, ten women will be able to bake all their bread in only one oven. When the bread is baked, each woman will divide it among the members of her family, but there will be very little for each one, and when they have eaten all of it, they will still be hungry.

²⁷After all those things happen, if you still do not obey me, if you still act against me, ²⁸I will be very angry with you, and I will act against you; I myself will punish you for your sins again and again. ²⁹You will be so hungry that you will kill your sons and daughters and eat their flesh. ³⁰I will make sure that other people destroy the hills where you have worshiped idols. I will smash the altars where you burn incense to worship your gods, and I will cause your corpses to be piled on the lifeless figures of your idols. And I will hate you. ³¹I will cause your cities to become heaps of ruins, and I will cause the buildings that you built for your idols to collapse. And I will not be pleased at all with the aroma of your offerings that are burned on the altar. ³²I will completely ruin your country, with the result that even your enemies who capture it will be shocked when they see this happen. ³³I will enable your enemies to kill you with their swords, and I will cause them to scatter the rest of you among other people groups. I will make sure that they ruin your country and destroy your cities. ³⁴After that happens, as long as you are living in your enemies' countries, I will allow your land to rest, as you should have done every seven years. ³⁵During all the time that no one is in your land, it will be able to rest. This will be unlike you, who never allowed it to rest while you were there.

³⁶As for you people who will remain alive in the countries to which your enemies will have taken you, I will make you very afraid, so when you hear the wind blowing leaves, you will run away. ³⁷You will run as if a man with a sword were chasing you, and you will fall down, even though no one is coming behind you. You will stumble over each other trying to flee. You will not be able to stand and fight your enemies. ³⁸Many of you will die in your enemies' countries. ³⁹And those of you who remain alive will slowly die and rot there because of your sins and the sins of your ancestors.

⁴⁰⁻⁴¹But your descendants must confess their sins and the sins that their ancestors committed. Their ancestors acted unfaithfully toward me and were hostile to me, so I forced them to go to their enemies' countries. But when your descendants humble themselves and stop being very stubborn and accept being punished for their sins, ⁴²I will keep in mind the covenant that I made with your ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and what I promised to them about the land of Canaan. ⁴³But before that happens, my people will be forced to leave their land, with the result that the land will be able to rest while no one is in it, and while I am punishing the people for rejecting my laws and hating my decrees. ⁴⁴But I will still not reject them or hate them and destroy them completely. I will not cancel the covenant that I made with them. I will still be Yahweh, the God whom they should worship. ⁴⁵I will keep in mind the covenant that I made with your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, something that the people of all nations heard about. I did this so that I, Yahweh, would be your God."

⁴⁶Those are the commandments, the decrees, and the laws that Yahweh established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelite people by giving them to Moses to tell to them.

Chapter 27

¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²"Tell the Israelite people these things for me: 'If a man solemnly promises to set apart another person to belong only to Yahweh, Yahweh will be willing to set that person free from having to do that if the responsible man pays the priest an amount of money. The priest must calculate the amount of money in terms of the silver pieces that they use in Yahweh's sacred tent. ³These are the amounts that Yahweh has set for this kind of transaction:

fifty pieces of silver for men who are between twenty and sixty years old;

⁴thirty pieces of silver for adult women who are between twenty and sixty years old.

⁵Twenty pieces of silver would be paid for young men who are between five and twenty years old;

ten pieces of silver for young women who are between five and twenty years old;

⁶five pieces of silver for boys who are between one month and five years old;

three pieces of silver for girls who are between one month and five years old.

⁷Fifteen pieces of silver would be paid for men who are more than sixty years old;

ten pieces of silver for women who are more than sixty years old.

⁸If anyone who has made such a solemn promise is very poor and unable to pay to set free the person whom he has given to Yahweh, he must take that person to the priest. The priest will set the price for freeing him to an amount that the person can pay.

⁹If someone solemnly promises Yahweh to give him an animal that is acceptable to him, that animal becomes very special to Yahweh; it belongs to him alone. ¹⁰The person who promised to give it must not give another animal instead of the one that he promised. He must not substitute a bad one for a good one or even a better one than the one offered. If he tries to do that, both animals will become dedicated to Yahweh. ¹¹If the animal that he wishes to give to Yahweh is a kind that is unacceptable to be an offering, he must take the animal to the priest.

¹²The priest then will decide what its value is, according to the animal's quality. Whatever value the priests sets will be the value, and that is the price of the animal. ¹³If the man who gave the animal later decides that he wants to buy it back, he must pay to the priest that price plus an added one-fifth.

¹⁴Similarly, if someone dedicates his house, and to set it apart for the honor of Yahweh, the priest will decide how much it is worth, which will depend on the house's condition. Whatever the priest says that it is worth, that will be its value. ¹⁵If a man set apart his house for the honor of Yahweh, but later he wants to buy it back, he must pay that price plus an added one-fifth, and then the house will belong to him again.

¹⁶If someone sets apart for the honor of Yahweh some of the property that belongs to him and his family, its value will be determined by the quantity of seed that would be needed to sow that entire tract of land. It will be ten pieces of silver for each 220 liters of seed. ¹⁷If the man sets apart for the honor of Yahweh the land during the year of the celebration of Jubilee, its value will be the full amount. ¹⁸But if he sets apart his field to Yahweh after the year of the celebration of Jubilee, the priest will count the number of years until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee, and if there are not many years that remain, the price will be much lower than the full price. ¹⁹If the person who set apart the field for Yahweh later wants to buy it back, he must pay to the priest the price that the priest says it is worth, plus an added one-fifth, and then the field will belong to that man again. ²⁰However, if he does not buy

it back, or if it has been sold to someone else, he will never be permitted to buy it back again. ²¹In the year of the celebration of Jubilee, it will be permanently set apart as a holy gift for Yahweh, and it will be given to the priest.

²²If someone sets apart for the honor of Yahweh some land that he has bought, land which is not part of the land that his family has always owned, ²³the priest must count the number of years until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee to determine how much it is worth, and the man must pay that amount to the priest on that day, and then that land will belong to him again, and his payment becomes a holy gift to Yahweh. ²⁴However, in the year of the celebration of Jubilee, the land will again come into the possession of the person from whom he bought it, the person whose family had always owned that land. ²⁵All the silver that is paid must be calculated in terms of the official pieces of silver in the sacred tent.

²⁶No one is permitted to dedicate the firstborn of any cow or sheep for any purpose, because the firstborn already belongs to Yahweh. ²⁷If someone gives to him an animal that is not acceptable to him, that person may later buy it back by paying what it is worth plus an added one-fifth of its value. If he does not buy it back, it must be sold for its standard price.

²⁸However, no slave or animal or family land that someone owns can be sold or bought back after it has been dedicated to Yahweh. It becomes holy to Yahweh.

²⁹No person who has done something that Yahweh considers to be very wicked is permitted to go free. The people must certainly execute such a person.

³⁰One tenth of all the crops and grain or fruit that is produced on anyone's land is sacred and belongs to Yahweh.

³¹If anyone wants to buy back any of that tenth, he must pay to the priest what it is worth plus an added one-fifth.

³²And every ten domestic animals belongs to Yahweh. When a shepherd counts them as they pass under his walking stick, to decide which ones he will give to me, he must mark every tenth one as belonging to Yahweh.

³³When he does that, he must not pick out the good ones or leave the bad ones, or substitute bad ones for good ones. If he substitutes one animal for another, both animals will belong to Yahweh, and the shepherd will not be permitted to buy them back."

³⁴Those are the commands that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai to tell to the people.

Numbers

Chapter 1

¹In the second month of the year after the Israelite people had left Egypt, Yahweh spoke to Moses while he was in the sacred tent, in the wilderness of Sinai. Yahweh said to him, ²“Count how many Israelite men, from each family in Israel, and count them by name. ³You and Aaron must count the men who are at least twenty years old, those who can serve as soldiers in the army. Write down the number of the men, along with the names of their clans and families. ⁴I have chosen one man from each of the tribes to help you to do this. Each one must be a leader of his clan.

⁵⁻⁶Their names are:

Elizur son of Shedeur, from the tribe of Reuben;

Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, from the tribe of Simeon; ⁷⁻⁹Nahshon son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah;

Nethanel son of Zuar, from the tribe of Issachar;

Eliab son of Helon, from the tribe of Zebulun; ¹⁰⁻¹¹Elishama son of Ammihud, from the tribe of Joseph's son Ephraim;

Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, from the tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh;

Abidan son of Gideoni, from the tribe of Benjamin;

¹²⁻¹⁵Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, from the tribe of Dan;

Pagiel son of Ocran, from the tribe of Asher;

Eliasaph son of Deuel, from the tribe of Gad;

Ahira son of Enan, from the tribe of Naphtali.”

¹⁶These were the men whom Yahweh chose from the people. They were leaders of their tribes. They were the chief men of the clans of the Israelite people.

¹⁷Aaron and Moses summoned all these leaders, ¹⁸and they gathered all of the people on that same day. They listed the names of all the men who were at least 20 years old, and with their names they wrote the names of their clans and their family groups ¹⁹just as Moses had commanded. They wrote the names while the Israelites were there in the wilderness of Sinai.

²⁰⁻²¹There were 46,500 men from the tribe of Reuben (who was Jacob's oldest son) who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²²⁻²³There were 59,300 men from the tribe of Simeon who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²⁴⁻²⁵There were 45,650 men from the tribe of Gad who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²⁶⁻²⁷There were 74,600 men from the tribe of Judah who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

28-29 There were 54,400 men from the tribe of Issachar who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

30-31 There were 57,400 men from the tribe of Zebulun who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

32-33 There were 40,500 men from the tribe of Ephraim who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

34-35 There were 32,200 men from the tribe of Manasseh who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

36-37 There were 35,400 men from the tribe of Benjamin who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

38-39 There were 62,700 men from the tribe of Dan who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

40-41 There were 41,500 men from the tribe of Asher who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

42-43 There were 53,400 men from the tribe of Naphtali who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

44-45 That was the number of men from each tribe that Aaron and Moses and the twelve leaders of the tribes of Israel listed, along with the names of their clans. **46** The total was 603,550 men.

47 But this number did not include the names of the men of the tribe of Levi, **48** because Yahweh had said to Moses, **49** "When you count the men of the tribes of Israel, do not count the men in the tribe of Levi. **50** Appoint the male descendants of Levi to take care of the sacred tent and the chest inside it that contains the tablets on which are written the Ten Commandments. They must also take care of the other things that are inside the tent. When you travel, they are the ones who must carry the sacred tent and all the things that are inside it, and they must take care of it and set up their tents around it. **51** Whenever it is time for all of you to move to another location, the descendants of Levi are the ones who must dismantle the sacred tent. And when it is time to stop traveling, they are the ones who must set it up again. Any other person who goes near the sacred tent to do this work must be executed. **52** The people of each Israelite tribe must set up their tents in their own area, and they must set up a flag that represents their tribe. **53** But the male descendants of Levi must set up their tents around the sacred tent in order to protect the other Israelite people from being punished by Yahweh for coming close to the sacred tent. The descendants of Levi are the ones who must stand around the sacred tent to guard it."

54 So the Israelite people did everything just like Yahweh had commanded Moses.

Chapter 2

1 Then Yahweh said this to Aaron and Moses, **2** "When the Israelites set up their tents, they are to set them up in areas that surround the sacred tent, but not close to it. The people of each tribe must set up their tents in a different area. Each tribe must put up a flag in that area that identifies their tribe.

3-4 The people of the tribe of Judah must set up their tents on the east side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Nahshon son of Amminadab, will be the leader of the 74,600 men of the tribe of Judah.

5-6 The people of the tribe of Issachar will set up their tents beside Judah. Nethanel son of Zuar will be the leader of the 54,400 men of the tribe of Issachar.

7-8 The people of the tribe of Zebulun will set up their tents beside Issachar. Eliab son of Helon, will be the leader of the 57,400 men of the tribe of Zebulun.

9 So there will be 186,400 troops on the east side of the sacred tent. Whenever the Israelites move to a new location, those three tribes must go in front of the others.

10-11 The tribe of Reuben must set up their tents on the south side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Elizur son of Shedeur, will be the leader of the 46,500 men of the tribe of Reuben.

12-13 The people of the tribe of Simeon will set up their tents beside Reuben. Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, will be the leader of the 59,300 men of the tribe of Simeon.

14-15 The people of the tribe of Gad will set up their tents beside Simeon. Eliasaph son of Deuel, will be the leader of the 45,650 men of the tribe of Gad.

16 So there will be 151,450 troops on the south side of the sacred tent. Those three tribes will follow the first group when the Israelites travel.

17 Behind that group will walk the descendants of Levi, who will carry the sacred tent. The Israelites will march in the same order that they always set up their tents. Each tribe will carry its own flag.

18-19 The tribe of Ephraim must set up their tents on the west side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Elishama son of Ammihud, will be the leader of the 40,500 men of the tribe of Ephraim.

20-21 The people of the tribe of Manasseh will set up their tents beside Ephraim. Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, will be the leader of the 32,200 men of the tribe of Manasseh.

22-23 The people of the tribe of Benjamin will set up their tents beside Manasseh. Abidan son of Gideoni, will be the leader of the 35,400 men of the tribe of Benjamin.

24 So there will be 108,100 troops on the west side of the sacred tent. Those three tribes will follow the second group, behind the descendants of Levi.

25-26 The tribe of Dan must set up their tents on the north side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, will be the leader of the 62,700 men of the tribe of Dan.

27-28 The people of the tribe of Asher will set up their tents beside Dan. Pagiel son of Ocran, will be the leader of the 41,500 men of the tribe of Asher.

29-30 The people of the tribe of Naphtali will set up their tents beside Asher. Ahira son of Enan, will be the leader of the 53,400 men of the tribe of Naphtali.

31 So there will be 157,600 troops on the north side of the sacred tent. Those three tribes will be last. They must carry their own flags when the Israelites travel."

32 So there were 603,550 Israelite men who were able to fight who were listed according to their families' ancestors.

33 But just as Yahweh had commanded, Moses and Aaron did not count the Levites among the people of Israel.

34 The Israelites did everything that Yahweh had told Moses. They set up their tents close to their tribal flags, and when they traveled to a new location, they walked with their own clans and family groups.

Chapter 3

1 These are some of the things that happened to Aaron and Moses when Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.

²Aaron had four sons. They were Nadab the oldest, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ³These are the names of Aaron's sons who were anointed priests and set apart as priests and whom he ordained to serve as priests. ⁴But, while Yahweh was watching, Nadab and Abihu died in the wilderness of Sinai because they burned incense in a manner that was disobedient to what Yahweh had commanded. They had no sons, so Eleazar and Ithamar were the only sons of Aaron who were left to be priests, along with their father Aaron.

⁵Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁶"Bring the men of the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron, in order that they may assist him. ⁷They will serve Aaron and all the other Israelite people, while they do their work inside the sacred tent and outside it. ⁸They must serve all the Israelite people by taking care of all the things that are inside the sacred tent. ⁹Appoint them to help Aaron and his two sons. I have chosen them from all the Israelite people to do that. ¹⁰Appoint Aaron and his two sons to do the work that priests do. But anyone else who comes close to the sacred tent to do that work must be executed."

¹¹Yahweh also told Moses, ¹²"Note that from all the Israelites I have chosen the men of the tribe of Levi to take the places of all the firstborn sons of the Israelite people. The male descendants of Levi belong to me, ¹³because truly all the firstborn males belong to me. That is because on the day that I killed all the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt, I spared all the firstborn sons of the Israelites and set them apart for myself. I also set apart the firstborn males of your domestic animals. They belong to me, Yahweh."

¹⁴Yahweh spoke to Moses again in the wilderness of Sinai. He said, ¹⁵"Count the male members of the tribe of Levi. Write down their names and the names of their clans and family groups. Count all the males who are at least one month old." ¹⁶So Moses counted them, just as Yahweh commanded.

¹⁷Levi had three sons, whose names were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁸Gershon had two sons, Libni and Shimei. The clans who were descended from them had the same names as those two sons.

¹⁹Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. The clans who were descended from them had the same names as those four sons.

²⁰Merari had two sons, Mahli and Mushi. The clans who were descended from them had the same names as those two sons.

Those are the clans who were descended from Levi.

²¹The two clans descended from Gershon are those that were descended from his sons Libni and Shimei. ²²In those two clans there were 7,500 males who were at least one month old. ²³They were told to set up their tents on the west side of the sacred tent. ²⁴The leader of those two clans was Eliasaph son of Lael. ²⁵Their work was to take care of the sacred tent, including its curtains and coverings and the curtain at its entrance, ²⁶the curtains that formed the walls around the courtyard that is around the tent and around the altar, the curtains that were at the entrance of the courtyard, and the ropes for fastening the tent. They also did all the work of taking care of the things outside the sacred tent.

²⁷The clans that were descended from Kohath were those descended from his sons Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. ²⁸In those four clans there were 8,600 males who were at least one month old. The work of the men of the clans was to take care of the things that are inside the sacred tent. ²⁹They set up their tents on the south side of the sacred tent. ³⁰The leader of those four clans was Elizaphan son of Uzziel. ³¹The work of the men of those clans was to take care of the sacred chest, the table on which the priest put the sacred bread, the lampstand, the altars, all the items that the priest used in the sacred tent, and the curtain that is inside the tent. Their work was also to take care of the things inside the tent.

³²Aaron's son Eleazar was the leader of all the male descendants of Levi. He supervised all the work that was done at the sacred tent.

³³The clans that were descended from Merari were those descended from his sons Mahli and Mushi. ³⁴In those two clans there were 6,200 males who were at least one month old. ³⁵They were told to set up their tents on the north side of the sacred tent. The leader of those two clans was Zuriel son of Abihail. ³⁶The work of the men of those two clans was to take care of the frames that held up the tent, the crossbars, the pillars, and the bases. They also did all the work that was connected with those items. ³⁷Their work was also to take care of the posts that held up the curtains that formed the walls of the courtyard, and all the bases, tent pegs, and ropes that fastened those curtains.

³⁸Aaron and Moses and Aaron's sons were told to set up their tents in the area in front of the sacred tent, on the east side. Their work was to supervise the work that would be done in and around the sacred tent, for the benefit of the Israelite people. Only the priests were permitted to do that. Yahweh declared that anyone else who went near the tent to do the work that the priests do must be executed.

³⁹When Aaron and Moses counted all the males who were at least one month old, who belonged to the clans descended from Levi, the total was twenty-two thousand.

⁴⁰Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Now count all the other firstborn males in Israel who are at least one month old, and write down their names. ⁴¹Also, set apart for me the descendants of Levi to be substitutes for the firstborn males of the other Israelites. And set apart for me the livestock of the descendants of Levi to be substitutes for the firstborn livestock of the other Israelite people."

⁴²So Moses did that. He counted the firstborn males of all the Israelite people, as Yahweh had commanded. ⁴³The total of those who were at least one month old was 22,273.

⁴⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁴⁵"Set apart the descendants of Levi to be substitutes for the firstborn males of the other Israelite people. The descendants of Levi belong to me, Yahweh. ⁴⁶There are 273 more firstborn males of the other Israelite people than of the descendants of Levi. ⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸To pay for these 273 males, collect five pieces of silver for each of them. Each of those pieces of silver must weigh the same as each of the silver pieces that are stored in the sacred tent. Give this silver to Aaron and his sons."

⁴⁹So Moses did that. He collected the silver from those 273 males. ⁵⁰The total was 1,365 pieces of silver. Each silver piece weighed the same as each of the silver pieces stored in the sacred tent. ⁵¹Moses gave these silver pieces to Aaron and his sons, as Yahweh had commanded.

Chapter 4

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses and to Aaron, ²"Write down the names of the men who belong to the clans descended from Kohath. ³Write the names of the men who are between 30 and 50 years old. These will be men who will do work at the sacred tent.

⁴The work of these descendants of Kohath will be to take care of the sacred items that are used when the people worship at the sacred tent. ⁵When you Israelites move to another location, Aaron and his sons must enter the tent to take down the curtain that separates the very holy place from the holy place in the sacred tent. They must cover the sacred chest with that curtain. ⁶Then they must cover that with a covering made from fine leather skins. Over that they must spread a blue cloth. Then they must insert into the rings on the chest the poles for carrying it.

⁷Then they must put a blue cloth over the table on which the priests will put the bread to display before God. On top of the cloth they must put the bowls for incense, the pans, the other dishes, the jars for the wine that will be offered as a sacrifice, and the sacred bread. ⁸Over all of this they must spread a scarlet cloth. Finally, they must put on top a covering made from fine leather skins. Then they must insert into the rings at the corners of the tables the poles for carrying it.

⁹Then with another blue cloth they must cover the lampstand, the lamps, the lamp snuffers, the trays, and the special jars of olive oil to burn in the lamps. ¹⁰They must cover the lampstand and all the other items with a covering made from fine leather skins. They must place all these things on a frame for carrying them.

¹¹Then they must spread another blue cloth over the gold altar which is used for burning incense. Over this they must spread a covering made from fine leather skins. Then they must insert into the rings of that altar the poles for carrying it.

¹²They must take all the other items that are inside the sacred tent and wrap them in a blue cloth, cover that with a covering made from fine leather skins, and place all that on a frame for carrying it.

¹³Then they must remove the ashes from the altar on which they have burned sacrifices. Then they must cover the altar with a purple cloth. ¹⁴Then they must spread on top of the cloth all the items used at the altar—the pans for carrying the hot coals, the meat forks, the shovels, the bowls that hold the blood to sprinkle on the people, and all the other containers. Then they must spread over all those things a covering made from fine leather skins. Then they must insert into the rings at the sides of the altar the poles for carrying it.

¹⁵When Aaron and his sons have finished covering all these sacred things, the Israelite people will be ready to move to a new location. The descendants of Kohath must come and carry all the sacred things to the next place where the Israelites will set up their tents. But the descendants of Kohath must not touch any of these sacred items, because they will immediately die if they touch them. They are the ones who will carry these things, but they must not touch them.

¹⁶Aaron's son Eleazar will have the work of taking care of the olive oil for the lamps, the sweet smelling incense, the flour that will be burned on the altar each day, and the olive oil for anointing the priests. Eleazar is the one who will supervise the work that is done at the sacred tent and the men who take care of everything that is in it."

¹⁷Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ¹⁸⁻²⁰"When the descendants of Kohath approach the sacred items in the sacred tent to take them to another location, Aaron and his sons must always go in with them and show each of them what work to do and what things to carry. But the descendants of Kohath must not enter the sacred tent at any other time and look at the things that are in it. If they do that, I will get rid of all the descendants of Kohath."

²¹Yahweh also said to Moses, ²²"Write down the names of all the men who belong to the clans descended from Gershon. ²³Write the names of the men who are between thirty and fifty years old. They will be men who will also do work at the sacred tent.

²⁴This is the work that they must do and the things that they must carry when you move to a new location: ²⁵They must carry the curtains of the sacred tent. They must carry the sacred tent and all the things that cover it, including the outer covering made from fine leather skins, and the curtain which is at the entrance of the sacred tent. ²⁶They must also carry the curtains that form the wall that surrounds the courtyard that surrounds the sacred tent and the altar, the curtain that is at the entrance to the courtyard, and the ropes that fasten the curtains. They must also do the packing and loading of these things. ²⁷Aaron and his sons will supervise the work of all the descendants of Gershon. That work includes carrying those things and doing other work that is necessary for moving them. They must tell each of the descendants of Gershon what things they must carry. ²⁸Those are the tasks that you must give to the men who belong to the clans descended from Gershon. Aaron's son Ithamar is the one who will supervise their work.

²⁹Count also the men who belong to the clans descended from Merari. ³⁰Write the names of the men who are between thirty and fifty years old. They will be men who will also work at the sacred tent. ³¹Their work will be to carry the frames that hold up the sacred tent, the crossbars, the posts that hold up the curtains, and the bases.

³²They must also carry the posts for the curtains that form the walls of the courtyard and the bases for the posts, the tent pegs, and the ropes to fasten the curtains. Tell each man what things he must carry. ³³Those are the tasks that the descendants of Merari must do at the sacred tent. Aaron's son Ithamar is the one who will supervise them."

³⁴So Aaron and Moses and the Israelite leaders counted the descendants of Kohath, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ³⁵They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old who were able to work at the sacred tent. ³⁶The total was 2,750 men. ³⁷They were the descendants of Kohath who were able to work at the sacred tent. Aaron and Moses counted them just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

³⁸They also counted the descendants of Gershon, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ³⁹They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old who were able to work at the sacred tent. ⁴⁰The total was 2,630 men. ⁴¹They were the descendants of Gershon who were able to work at the sacred tent. Aaron and Moses counted them as Yahweh had commanded.

⁴²They also counted the descendants of Merari, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ⁴³They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old who were able to work at the sacred tent. ⁴⁴The total was 3,200 men. ⁴⁵They were the descendants of Merari who were able to work. Aaron and Moses counted them as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

⁴⁶So Aaron and Moses and the Israelite leaders counted all the descendants of Levi, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ⁴⁷They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old. They were ones who were able to work at the sacred tent and who carried the tent and everything that was connected with it.

⁴⁸The total was 8,580 men. ⁴⁹They completed the counting of all the descendants of Levi, as Yahweh had commanded Moses. And they told each man what work he was to do and what things he must carry when they moved to a new location.

Chapter 5

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Tell this to the Israelite people: 'You must send away from your camp where you have your tents any man or woman who has leprosy and anyone who has a discharge of some fluid from his body, and anyone who has become unacceptable to God because of having touched a corpse. ³Send them away in order that they will not touch people in the camp area where I live among you and cause them to become unacceptable to me.'" ⁴So the Israelite people obeyed what Yahweh commanded Moses.

⁵Yahweh also told Moses, ⁶"Tell this to the Israelite people: 'If someone commits a crime against another person, I consider that that person has done wrong to me. ⁷That person must confess that he or she is guilty, and he or she must pay to the person to whom wrong was done what others consider to be a suitable payment for what he has done, and he must pay an extra 20 percent. ⁸If the person against whom the wrong was done has died and there is no relative to whom the money can be paid, then the money belongs to me, and it must be paid to the priest. In addition, the one who did the wrong must give a male sheep to the priest to sacrifice in order that that person's sin may be forgiven. ⁹All the sacred offerings that the Israelites present to me by bringing them to the priest will belong to the priest. ¹⁰The priest can keep those gifts.'"

¹¹Yahweh also said this to Moses: ¹²"Tell this to the Israelite people: 'Suppose a man thinks that his wife has not always slept faithfully only with him. ¹³Suppose he thinks that she has slept with another man, but he does not know if this is true or not, because he did not see her do it. She was not caught in the act and the fact that she broke her vow to her husband could not be proved because no one saw her doing that. ¹⁴But if the woman's husband is jealous, and if he suspects that she has committed adultery, and he would want to know whether that is true or not, and so there is a test whether she had been impure. ¹⁵To test whether she had committed adultery he should take his wife to the priest. He must take along as an offering two liters of barley flour. The priest must not pour olive oil or incense on it, because this is an offering that the man has brought because he is jealous. It is an offering to find out if she is guilty or not.

¹⁶The priest must tell the woman to stand in front of the altar in my presence. ¹⁷He must put some sacred water in a clay jar, and then he must put some dirt from the floor of the sacred tent into the water. ¹⁸He must untie the woman's hair. Then he must put in her hands the flour offering that her jealous husband is offering to determine

whether she has committed adultery or not. The priest must hold the bowl that contains bitter water that will cause the woman to be cursed if she is guilty. ¹⁹The priest must require her to solemnly declare that she will tell the truth. He must say to her, "Has another man slept with you? Have you faithfully slept only with your husband or not? If you have not slept with another man, nothing bad will happen to you if you drink the water. ²⁰But if you have slept with another man, Yahweh will curse you. ²¹⁻²²Your womb will shrivel up and your stomach will swell up. You will never be able to give birth to children, and as a result, everyone will curse you and avoid you. If you have committed adultery, when you drink this water, that is what will happen to you." Then the woman must answer, "If I am guilty, I will not object if that happens."

²³Then the priest must write with ink on a small scroll these curses and then wash the ink off into the bitter water. ²⁴⁻²⁵The priest must take from her the offering of barley flour that she is holding; he must lift it up to dedicate it to me. Then he must put it on the altar ²⁶and burn part of it as a sacrifice. Then the woman must drink the bitter water. ²⁷If the woman has committed adultery instead of faithfully sleeping only with her husband, the water will cause her to suffer greatly. Her stomach will swell up and her womb will shrink, and she will be unable to give birth to children. And then her relatives will curse her. ²⁸But if she is innocent, her body will not be harmed, and she will still be able to give birth to children.

²⁹That is the ritual that must be performed when a woman who is married has sinned by committing adultery, ³⁰or when a man is jealous and suspects that his wife has slept with another man. The priest must tell that woman to stand at the altar in my presence and obey these instructions. ³¹Even if the woman has not done what the husband suspected, he will not be punished for doing something wrong by bringing his wife to the priest. But if his wife is guilty, she will suffer as a result."

Chapter 6

¹Yahweh also said this to Moses: ²"Tell this to the Israelite people: If any of you wants to make a solemn promise to dedicate himself to belong to me in a special way, after you obey these instructions, you will be called a Nazir, which means 'a dedicated person.' ³You must not drink any wine or other alcoholic drink. You must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. ⁴You must not eat anything that comes from grapevines, not even the skins or seeds of grapes, during the time that you are a Nazir.

⁵Even your hair will be dedicated to me during the time that you are a Nazir, so you must never allow anyone to cut your hair. Until the time that your solemn promise to dedicate yourself to me is ended, you must allow your hair to grow long. ⁶And you must not go near a corpse during the time that you are a Nazir. ⁷Even if the person who died is your father or your mother or your brother or your sister, you must not cause yourself to become unacceptable to me by coming close to the corpse. Your long hair shows that you belong to me in a special way, so you must do what you have solemnly promised and not cut your hair. ⁸You are required to keep doing this all the time that you are dedicated to me in this special way.

⁹If anyone dies very suddenly when he is near you, then your hair that you have dedicated to me is no longer sacred. So you must wait seven days and then shave it all off. Then you must perform a special ritual to cause yourself to become acceptable to me again. ¹⁰The next day you must bring two doves or two pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent. ¹¹The priest must kill the birds and offer them as sacrifices. One of them will be an offering to take away the guilt of your sin, and the other will be an offering that is burned completely to please me. After the priests burn them on the altar, I will forgive you for having come close to a corpse, and when your hair grows again it will be dedicated to me again. ¹²The amount of time that you were set apart for me the previous time does not count, because you had become unacceptable to me by coming close to a corpse during the time that you were a Nazir. So you must again make a solemn promise to dedicate yourself to me for the entire amount of time that you indicated the previous time. And you must also sacrifice a one year old lamb to take away your guilt.

¹³When the time that you promised to dedicate yourself to me is ended, go to the entrance of the sacred tent

¹⁴and offer as sacrifices to me three animals that have no defects. Offer a one year old ram that will be burned completely, a one year old female lamb as a sacrifice to take away the guilt of your sin, and one full-grown ram as a sacrifice to restore fellowship with me.

¹⁵When you bring those animals, you must also bring some wine to offer as a sacrifice. And you must also bring a basket of bread that you have made with very good flour and olive oil. But you must not put any yeast in the bread. Also brush some olive oil on some thin wafers and bring them to the priest.

¹⁶The priest will put the young lamb and the young ram on the altar and completely burn them, in order that I will be pleased and will forgive you. ¹⁷Then he will kill the full-grown ram as an offering to restore fellowship with me, and he will also burn on the altar some of the bread and the flour and wine.

¹⁸After that, you must stand at the entrance of the sacred tent and shave off your hair. Then you must put that hair in the fire that is under the animal that has been sacrificed on the altar to restore fellowship with me.

¹⁹The meat from the ram's shoulder must be boiled. After it is cooked, the priest will take it along with one of the loaves of bread and one wafer which has been brushed with olive oil, and he will put them in your hands. ²⁰Then the priest will take them back and lift them up high to dedicate them to me. They now belong to the priest, and he is permitted to eat some of the meat from the ram's shoulder and from its ribs and from one of its thighs, because that meat is his share of the sacrifice. After that, you will no longer be a Nazir, and you will again be permitted to drink wine.

²¹Those are the regulations about the offerings that Nazir solemnly promise to bring to me to end their time of being dedicated to me. They must bring these offerings, but if they want to, they may bring additional offerings. And they must do everything that they solemnly promised to do when they dedicated themselves to me."

²²Yahweh also said to Moses, ²³"Tell Aaron and his sons that when they ask me to bless the people, they must say,

²⁴Yahweh bless you

and protect you.

²⁵May he smile on you

and act kindly toward you.

²⁶May he be good to you

and cause things to go well for you."

²⁷Then Yahweh said, "If Aaron and his sons ask me to bless the Israelite people, truly I will bless them."

Chapter 7

¹When Moses had finished setting up the sacred tent, he poured oil on it, and set it apart for the honor of Yahweh. He also dedicated the things that are inside the sacred tent, and the altar for burning sacrifices, and all the things that would be used at the altar. ²Then the leaders of the twelve Israelite tribes, the same men who had helped Aaron and Moses to count the men who could fight in battles, ³came to the sacred tent, bringing gifts to Yahweh. They brought six sturdy carts and twelve oxen, one ox from each of the leaders and a cart from each of the two leaders.

⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁵"Accept these gifts, in order that the descendants of Levi can use them for carrying the sacred items that are here at the sacred tent."

⁶So Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the descendants of Levi. ⁷He gave two carts and four oxen to the descendants of Gershon for their work, ⁸and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the descendants of Merari for their work. Aaron's son Ithamar was the supervisor of all their work. ⁹But he did not give any carts or oxen to the descendants of Kohath, because they took care of the sacred items that were to be carried on their shoulders, not on carts.

¹⁰On the day that the altar was dedicated, the twelve leaders brought other gifts to be dedicated and put them in front of the altar. ¹¹Yahweh said to Moses, "On each of the next twelve days one leader should bring his gifts for the dedication of the altar."

¹²⁻¹³On the first day, Nahshon son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

¹⁴and a small gold dish that weighed 113 grams and was filled with incense.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷They also brought the gifts of a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹On the second day, Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram. Both of these were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They were both weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

²⁰⁻²³Nethanel also brought the gifts of a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

²⁴⁻²⁶On the third day, Eliab son of Helon, leader of the tribe of Zebulun brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offering. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

²⁷⁻²⁹Eliab also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

30-32 On the fourth day, Elizur son of Shedeur, leader of the tribe of Reuben brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

33-35 Elizur also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

36-38 On the fifth day, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, leader of the tribe of Simeon brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings; they both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

39-41 Shelumiel also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

42-44 On the sixth day, Eliasaph son of Deuel, leader of the tribe of Gad brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed about 110 grams, filled with incense.

45-47 Eliasaph also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

48-50 On the seventh day, Elishama son of Ammihud, leader of the tribe of Ephraim brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

51-53 Elishama also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

54-56 On the eighth day, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, leader of the tribe of Manasseh brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

57-59 Gamaliel also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

60-62 On the ninth day, Abidan son of Gideoni, leader of the tribe of Benjamin brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

63-65 Adiban also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

66-68 On the tenth day, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, leader of the tribe of Dan brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

69-71 Ahiezer also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

72-74 On the eleventh day, Pagiel son of Okran, leader of the tribe of Asher brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

75-77 Pagiel also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

78-80 On the twelfth day, Ahira son of Enan, leader of the tribe of Naphtali brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

81-83 Ahira also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

84-86 When the altar was dedicated to Yahweh, those twelve leaders brought these gifts:

twelve silver plates and twelve silver bowls, weighing a total of twenty-six and one-half kilograms, each of them weighed on the scales kept in the sacred tent,

and twelve gold dishes filled with incense, weighing a total of one and two-fifths kilograms, each weighed on those same scales.

87-88 The twelve leaders also brought twelve bulls, twelve rams, and twelve one-year-old male lambs to be sacrificed completely by being burned along with the flour offerings,

twelve goats to be sacrificed to take away the guilt of the people's sins,

and twenty-four bulls, sixty rams, sixty goats, and sixty male lambs that were one year old, to be sacrifices to restore the people's fellowship with Yahweh.

89 Whenever Moses entered the sacred tent to talk with Yahweh, he heard Yahweh's voice speaking between the two images of creatures with wings that were above the lid of the sacred chest.

Chapter 8

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Tell Aaron to put the seven lamps on the lampstand and place them in such a way that they shine toward the front of the lampstand."

³So Moses told him what Yahweh said, and he did that. ⁴The lampstand had been made from gold that had been hammered from one large lump of gold, from its base to the decorations at the top that resembled flowers. The lampstand was made exactly as Yahweh had told Moses that it should be made.

⁵Yahweh also said to Moses, ⁶“You must cause the descendants of Levi to be acceptable to me by setting them apart from the other Israelite people. ⁷Do that by sprinkling them with water which will symbolize their being freed from the guilt of their sins. Then they must shave off all the hair of their bodies and wash their clothes. ⁸Then they must bring one bull and some flour mixed with olive oil. Those things will be burned as sacrifices. They must also bring another bull that will be sacrificed to take away the guilt of their sins. ⁹Then you must summon all the Israelite people to come together in front of the sacred tent, to gather around the descendants of Levi. ¹⁰Then the Israelite people must lay their hands on the descendants of Levi. ¹¹Aaron must then present them to me to be a gift from the Israelite people, as if he had lifted them up to me, in order that they can work for me at the sacred tent.

¹²After that, the descendants of Levi must place their hands on the heads of the two bulls. Then the bulls will be killed and burned on the altar. One will be an offering to take away the guilt of their sins, and the other will be completely burned to please me. ¹³The descendants of Levi must stand at the altar in front of Aaron and his sons, and you must then dedicate them to me, as if you had lifted them up to me. ¹⁴This ritual will show that the descendants of Levi are set apart from the other Israelites and that they belong to me.

¹⁵After the descendants of Levi have been made acceptable to me, and presented to me like a special offering as if they had been lifted up to me, they may start to work at the sacred tent. ¹⁶They will belong to me. They will work for me as substitutes for the firstborn males of all the Israelites, who also belong to me. ¹⁷All the firstborn males in Israel, both the people and the animals, are mine. When I caused all the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt to die, I set them apart for myself. But I spared the firstborn of all males of the Israelites, of people and animals, because they are mine. ¹⁸But now I have chosen the descendants of Levi to take the places of the firstborn male sons of the other Israelites. ¹⁹I have appointed the descendants of Levi to help Aaron and his sons at the sacred tent, as Aaron and his sons offer the sacrifices to take away the guilt of the Israelite people's sins, and to prevent the Israelites from coming close to the tent with the result that a plague would cause many of them to become sick and die.”

²⁰Aaron and Moses and the other Israelites helped the descendants of Levi to do everything that Yahweh had commanded. ²¹The descendants of Levi sprinkled themselves with water to symbolize that they had been freed from the guilt of their sins, and they washed their clothes. Then Aaron brought them to the altar to present them to Yahweh, just as if he had lifted them up to him, and he offered sacrifices to take away the guilt of their sins and cause them to become acceptable to Yahweh. ²²After that, the descendants of Levi started to work at the sacred tent to assist Aaron and his sons. They did that just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²³Yahweh also said this to Moses: ²⁴“The descendants of Levi who are between twenty-five years and fifty years old will work at the sacred tent. ²⁵But after they become fifty years old, they must retire. ²⁶They may help their fellow descendants of Levi do their work at the sacred tent, but they must not do the work themselves. That is what you must tell them about the work they will do.”

Chapter 9

¹One year after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first month of the second year, while they were in the wilderness of Sinai, Yahweh said to Moses, ²“Tell the Israelite people that they must celebrate the Passover festival again. ³They must do it on the fourteenth day of this month, early in the evening, and they must obey all the instructions about it that I gave you previously.”

⁴So Moses told the people what Yahweh had said about celebrating the Passover. ⁵The people celebrated it there in the wilderness of Sinai, in the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

⁶But some of the Israelite people had touched a corpse, and as a result they had become unfit to celebrate the Passover. So they asked Aaron and Moses, ⁷"It is true that we have touched a corpse. But why should that prevent us from celebrating the Passover festival and offering sacrifices to Yahweh like everyone else?"

⁸Moses replied, "Wait here until I go into the sacred tent and find out what Yahweh says about it."

⁹So Moses went into the tent and asked Yahweh what he should tell the people, and this is what Yahweh said:

¹⁰"Tell this to the Israelite people: 'If any of you or your descendants touch a corpse and as a result become unacceptable to me, or if you are away from home on a long trip at the time to celebrate the Passover, you will still be permitted to celebrate it. ¹¹But you must celebrate it exactly one month later, early in the evening of the fourteenth day of that month. Eat the meat of the lamb for the Passover festival with bread that is baked without yeast, and eat bitter herbs. ¹²Do not leave any of it until the next morning. And do not break any of the lamb's bones. Obey all the regulations about celebrating the Passover. ¹³But if any of you has not done anything that would make you unfit to celebrate the Passover festival, and you are not away from home on a long trip, and you do not sacrifice to me at the proper time, you will no longer belong to my people. You will be punished.

¹⁴Settled foreigners who live among you must also celebrate the Passover festival and obey all my commands concerning it.'"

¹⁵⁻¹⁶On the day that the sacred tent was set up, a cloud covered it. But from the time that the sun set until the time that the sun rose the next day, the cloud resembled a huge fire. And that is what happened every day that the Israelites were in the wilderness. ¹⁷When the cloud rose up and started to move to a new location, the Israelites followed it. When the cloud stopped, the Israelites stopped there and set up their tents. ¹⁸The Israelites moved when Yahweh told them to move and stopped when Yahweh told them to stop by causing the cloud to move or stop. When the cloud stayed over the sacred tent, the Israelites stayed at that place. ¹⁹Sometimes the cloud stayed over the sacred tent for a long time, so when that happened, the Israelites did not move. ²⁰Sometimes the cloud remained over the sacred tent for only a few days. The people stopped and set up their tents as Yahweh commanded them, and they moved to a new location when Yahweh commanded them to do that. ²¹Sometimes the cloud stayed in one place for only one day. When that happened, when the cloud rose up into the sky the next morning, then the people moved. Whenever the cloud moved, during the day or during the night, the people moved. ²²If the cloud stayed over the sacred tent for two days, or for a month, or for a year, during that time the people stayed where they were. But when the cloud rose up into the sky, they started to move. ²³When Yahweh commanded them to stop and set up their tents, they did that. When he told them to move, they moved. They did whatever Yahweh told Moses they should do.

Chapter 10

¹Yahweh also told Moses, ²"Tell someone to make two trumpets by hammering each one from one lump of silver. Blow the trumpets to summon the people to come together and also to signal that they must move their tents to a new location. ³If both trumpets are blown, it means that everyone must gather together at the entrance of the sacred tent. ⁴If only one trumpet is blown, it means that only the twelve leaders of the tribes must gather together. ⁵If the trumpets are blown loudly, the tribes that are to the east of the sacred tent should start to move. ⁶When the trumpets are blown loudly the second time, the tribes that are to the south should start to move. The loud blasts on the trumpet will signal that they should start to move. ⁷When you want only to gather the people together, blow the trumpets, but do not blow them as loudly.

⁸The priests who are descended from Aaron are the ones who should blow the trumpets. That is a regulation that will never be changed. ⁹When you fight against enemies who attack you in your own land, tell the priests to blow the trumpets loudly. I, Yahweh, your God, will hear that, and I will rescue you from your enemies. ¹⁰Also tell the priests to blow the trumpets when the people are happy, and at the festivals each year, and at the times when they celebrate the new moon each month. Tell them to blow the trumpets when the people bring offerings that will be

completely burned, and when they bring offerings to restore fellowship with me. If they do that, it will help you to think about me. You must do that, because I am Yahweh your God."

¹¹In the second year after the Israelites left Egypt, on the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud rose up from above the sacred tent. ¹²So the Israelites moved from the wilderness of Sinai, and they continued traveling north until the cloud stopped in the wilderness of Paran. ¹³That was the first time they moved, obeying the instructions that Yahweh had given to Moses to tell them.

¹⁴The group that went first, carrying their flag, was the group from the tribe of Judah. Nahshon son of Amminadab, was their leader. ¹⁵The group from the tribe of Issachar followed them. Nethanel son of Zuar, was their leader.

¹⁶The group from the tribe of Zebulun went next. Eliab son of Helon, was their leader. ¹⁷Then they dismantled the sacred tent, and the descendants of Gershon and Merari carried it, and they went next.

¹⁸The group from the tribe of Reuben went next, carrying their flag. Elizur son of Shedeur was their leader. ¹⁹The group from the tribe of Simeon was next. Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai was their leader. ²⁰The group from the tribe of Gad was next. Eliasaph son of Deuel was their leader. ²¹The group descended from Kohath was next. They carried the sacred items from the sacred tent. The sacred tent was set up at the new location before they arrived there.

²²The group from the tribe of Ephraim was next, carrying their flag. Elishama son of Ammihud, was their leader.

²³The group from the tribe of Manasseh went next. Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, was their leader. ²⁴The group from the tribe of Benjamin was next. Abidan son of Gideoni, was their leader.

²⁵The ones who went last were the groups from the tribe of Dan, carrying their flag. Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, was their leader. ²⁶The group from the tribe of Asher went next. Pagiel son of Ocran, was their leader. ²⁷The group from the tribe of Naphtali went last. Ahira son of Enan, was their leader. ²⁸That was the order in which the groups of Israelite tribes traveled.

²⁹One day Moses said to his brother-in-law Hobab son of Reuel from the Midian people group, "We are on the way to the place that Yahweh promised to give to us. Come with us, and we will take good care of you, because Yahweh has promised to do good things for us Israelite people."

³⁰But Hobab replied, "No, I will not go with you. I want to return to my own land and to my own family."

³¹But Moses said, "Please do not leave us. You know the places where we can set up our tents in this desert, and you can guide us. ³²Come with us. We will share with you all the good things that Yahweh gives to us."

³³So Hobab agreed to go with them. The Israelites left Mount Sinai, which they called the Mountain of Yahweh, and they walked for three days. The men carrying the sacred chest went in front of the other people for those three days, and they kept looking for a place to set up their tents. ³⁴The cloud sent by Yahweh was over them every day.

³⁵Each morning when the men who were carrying the sacred chest started to walk, Moses said,

"Yahweh, arise!

Scatter your enemies!

Cause those who hate you to run away from you!"

³⁶And each time the men stopped to set down the sacred chest, Moses said,

"Yahweh, stay close to the multiplied thousands of us Israelites!"

Chapter 11

¹One day the people complained to Yahweh about their troubles. When Yahweh heard what they were saying, he became angry. So he sent a fire which burned among the people at the edge of their camp. ²Then the people cried out to Moses, and he prayed to Yahweh. Then the fire stopped burning. ³So they called that place Taberah, which means 'Burning,' because the fire from Yahweh had burned among them.

⁴Then some troublemakers from other people groups who were traveling with the Israelites began to want better food. And when they started complaining the Israelite people also started to complain. They said, "We wish we had some meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish that we ate while we were in Egypt, fish that was given to us without cost. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we could eat. ⁶But now we have lost our appetite, because all we have to eat is this manna!"

⁷The manna resembled small white seeds. ⁸Each morning the people would go out and gather some from the surface of the ground. Then they made flour by grinding it or pounding it with stones. Then they added water and boiled it in a pot, or they made flat cakes with it and baked them. The cakes tasted like bread that was baked with olive oil. ⁹Each night the manna came down on the ground where their tents were, like dew from the sky.

¹⁰Moses heard all the Israelite people complaining as they were standing in the entrances of their tents. Yahweh became very angry, and Moses was also very perturbed. ¹¹He went into the sacred tent and asked Yahweh, "Why have you brought this trouble on me, your servant? Act mercifully to me! What wrong have I done, with the result that you have appointed me to take care of all of these people? ¹²I am not their father. Why have you told me to take care of them like a woman carries around her baby and nurses it? How can I take them to the land that you promised to give to our ancestors? ¹³Where can I get meat to feed to all these people? They keep complaining to me, saying, 'Give us some meat to eat!' ¹⁴I cannot carry all these people's burdens by myself! They are like a heavy load to me, and I cannot carry this very heavy load anymore. ¹⁵If you intend to act like this toward me, kill me now. If you are really concerned about me, be kind to me and kill me to end my misery of trying to take care of them!"

¹⁶Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Summon seventy men whom you know are leaders among the Israelite people. Tell them to stand with you in front of the sacred tent. ¹⁷I will come down and talk with you there. Then I will take some of the power of my Spirit that you have, and I will put that power on them also. They will help you to take care of some of the things that the people are concerned about, in order that you will not need to do it alone.

¹⁸Furthermore, say to the people, 'Make yourselves acceptable to me, and tomorrow you will have meat to eat. You were complaining, and Yahweh heard you when you were saying, "We want some meat to eat. We had better food in Egypt!" Now Yahweh will give you some meat, and you will eat it. ¹⁹You will eat meat not only for one or two days, or only for five or ten or twenty days. ²⁰You will eat meat every day for one month, and then you will loathe it, and it will cause you to want to vomit. This will happen because you have rejected Yahweh who is here among you, and you have wailed in his presence, saying "We would have had better food to eat if we had not left Egypt."'"

²¹But Moses replied to Yahweh, "There are six hundred thousand men plus women and children here with me, so why do you say 'I will give them plenty of meat every day for a month!?' ²²Even if we killed all the sheep and cattle, that would not be enough to provide meat for all of them! Even if we caught all the fish in the sea and gave it to them, that would not be enough!" ²³But Yahweh said to Moses, "Do you think that I have no power? You will now see if I can do what I say I will do."

²⁴So Moses went out from the sacred tent and told the people what Yahweh had said. Then he gathered together the seventy leaders and told them to stand around the sacred tent.

²⁵Then Yahweh came down in the cloud that was above the tent and spoke to Moses. He took some of the power of the Spirit that he had given to Moses and gave it to the seventy leaders. By means of the power of the Spirit within them, they prophesied, but they did that only once.

²⁶Two of the leaders whom Moses appointed, Eldad and Medad, were not there when the rest of them gathered together. They had not left their tents to go and stand around the sacred tent. But Yahweh's Spirit came on them also, and they started to prophesy. ²⁷So a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying where all their tents are!"

²⁸Joshua, who had helped Moses since he was a young man, said, "Sir, tell them to stop doing that!"

²⁹But Moses replied, "Are you worried that they might injure my reputation? I wish that all Yahweh's people could prophesy. I wish that Yahweh would give the power of his Spirit to all of them!" ³⁰Then Moses and all the leaders went back to their tents.

³¹Then Yahweh sent a strong wind from the sea. It blew quail into the area all around the camp, and caused the quail to fall onto the ground. They were piled up on the ground a meter high! ³²So the people went out and gathered up the quail all that day, and all that night, and all of the following day. It seemed as though each person gathered two cubic meters! They spread the quail out on the ground all around the camp, so that the quail would lose their moisture. ³³Then they cooked them and started to eat them. But while they were still eating the meat, Yahweh showed that he was very angry with them. He sent a severe plague on them, and many people died. ³⁴The people who died and were buried were the ones who had said they wanted to eat meat like they had formerly eaten in Egypt. So they called that place Kibroth Hattaavah, which means 'graves of those who craved.'

³⁵From there, the Israelites continued walking east until they arrived at Hazeroth, where they stopped and stayed for a long time.

Chapter 12

¹⁻²Moses' older sister Miriam and his older brother Aaron were jealous of Moses and said, "Is Moses the only one to whom Yahweh has spoken messages to tell to us? Does Yahweh not speak messages through us two also?" They also criticized Moses because he had married a woman who was a descendant of the Cush people group. And Yahweh heard Miriam and Aaron complaining about Moses.

³The truth was that Moses was a very humble person. He was more humble than anyone else on the earth.

⁴So immediately Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam. He said, "All three of you must go and stand at the sacred tent." So they did that. ⁵Then Yahweh descended to the entrance of the tent in a cloud that resembled a huge white pillar. He told Aaron and Miriam to step forward, so they did. ⁶Then he said to them,

"Listen to me!

When a prophet is among you,

I usually reveal myself to him by allowing him to see visions,

and I speak to him in dreams.

⁷But that is not the way I speak to my servant Moses.

I trust that he will lead my people well.

⁸So I talk to him face to face.

I speak to him clearly, not using parables.

He has even seen what I look like.

So you should be afraid to criticize my servant Moses!"

⁹Yahweh was very angry with Miriam and Aaron, and he left.

¹⁰When the cloud rose up from the sacred tent, Aaron looked at Miriam, and he saw that her skin was as white as snow, because she now had leprosy. ¹¹Aaron said to Moses, "My master, please do not punish us for this sin that we have foolishly committed. ¹²Do not allow Miriam to be like a baby that is already dead when it is born, whose flesh is already half decayed!"

¹³So Moses cried out to Yahweh, saying, "God, I plead with you to heal her!"

¹⁴But Yahweh replied, "If her father had rebuked her for doing something wrong by spitting in her face, she would have been ashamed for seven days. She should be ashamed because of what she has done. So send her outside the camp for seven days. Then she will not have leprosy anymore, and she may return to the camp." ¹⁵So they sent her outside the camp for seven days. The people did not move to another location until she returned.

¹⁶But after she returned, they left Hazeroth and moved north in the Paran Desert and set up their tents there.

Chapter 13

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Send some men to Canaan to explore it. That is the land that I will give to you Israelites. Send men who are leaders in their tribes."

³So Moses did what Yahweh commanded him. He sent out twelve Israelite men who were all leaders of their tribes. He sent them from their camp at Paran in the desert. ⁴These are the names of the men and the tribes they belonged to:

Shammua son of Zaccur, from the tribe of Reuben;

⁵Shaphat son of Hori, from the tribe of Simeon;

⁶Caleb son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Judah;

⁷Igal son of Joseph, from the tribe of Issachar;

⁸Hoshea the son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim;

⁹Palti son of Raphu, from the tribe of Benjamin;

¹⁰Gaddiel son of Sodi, from the tribe of Zebulun;

¹¹Gaddi son of Susi, from the tribe of Joseph's descendent Manasseh;

¹²Ammiel the son of Gemalli, from the tribe of Dan;

¹³Sethur son of Michael, from the tribe of Asher;

¹⁴Nahbi son of Vophsi, from the tribe of Naphtali;

¹⁵and Geuel son of Maki, from the tribe of Gad.

¹⁶Those are the names of the men whom Moses sent out to explore Canaan. Before they left, Moses gave Hoshea a new name, Joshua, which means 'Yahweh is the one who saves.'

¹⁷Before Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said to them, "Go through the southern Judean wilderness, and then go north into the hill country. ¹⁸See what the land is like. See if the people who live there are strong or weak. See if there are many people or only a few people. ¹⁹Find out what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Find

out about the towns in which they live. Do they have walls around them or not? ²⁰Find out about the soil. Is it fertile or not? Find out if there are trees there. Try to bring back some of the fruit that grows in that land." He said that because it was the beginning of the time to harvest grapes.

²¹So those men went to Canaan. They went through the entire land, from the wilderness of Zin in the south all the way to the city of Rehob near Lebo Hamath in the north. ²²In the southern Judean wilderness, they went to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, huge men descended from Anak, lived. Hebron was a city that was built seven years before the city of Zoan was built in Egypt. ²³In one valley, they cut from a grapevine one cluster of grapes. Because it was very large, they needed two men to carry it on a pole. They also picked some pomegranates and some figs to carry back to their camp. ²⁴They called that place Eshcol which means 'cluster' because they had cut that huge cluster of grapes there. ²⁵After they explored the land for forty days, they returned to their camp.

²⁶They came to Aaron and Moses and the rest of the Israelite people in the wilderness at Paran. They reported to everyone what they had seen. They also showed them the fruit that they had brought back. ²⁷But this is what they reported to Moses: "We arrived in the land that you sent us to explore. It is truly a beautiful land. It is a very fertile land. Here is some of the fruit. ²⁸But the people who live there are very strong. Their cities are large and are surrounded by walls. We even saw some of the huge descendants of Anak there. ²⁹The descendants of Amalek live in the southern part of the land, and the descendants of Heth, Jebus, and Amor live in the hill country to the north. The descendants of Canaan live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan River."

³⁰Caleb told the people who were standing near Moses to be quiet. Then he said, "We should go there and take the land, because we are certainly able to conquer it!"

³¹But the men who had gone with him said, "No, we cannot attack and defeat those people. They are much stronger than we are!" ³²So those men gave to the Israelite people a bad report about the land that they had explored. They said, "The land that we explored destroys the life those who try to attack it. And all the people living there are very tall. ³³We also saw giants there. They are the descendants of Anak (who come from the Nephilim, those giant people). When we saw these giants we felt as small as grasshoppers and they thought that we looked like grasshoppers too."

Chapter 14

¹That night, all the Israelite people cried loudly. ²The next day they all complained against Aaron and Moses. All the men said, "We wish that we had died in Egypt, or in this wilderness! ³Why is Yahweh bringing us to this land, where we men will be killed with swords? And they will take away our wives and children to be their slaves. Instead of going to Canaan, it would be better for us to return to Egypt!" ⁴Then some of them said to each other, "We should choose a leader who will take us back to Egypt!"

⁵Then Aaron and Moses bowed down to pray in front of all the Israelite people who had gathered there. ⁶Joshua and Caleb, two of the men who had explored the land, tore their clothes because they were very dismayed. ⁷They said to the Israelite people, "The land that we explored is very good. ⁸If Yahweh is pleased with us, he will lead us into that very fertile land, and he will give it to us. ⁹So do not rebel against Yahweh! And do not be afraid of the people in that land! We will gobble them up! They do not have anyone who will protect them, but Yahweh will be with us and help us. So do not be afraid of them!"

¹⁰Then all the Israelite people talked about killing Caleb and Joshua by throwing stones at them. But suddenly Yahweh's glory appeared to them at the sacred tent. ¹¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, "How long will these people reject me? I am tired of them not believing in what I can do, in spite of all the miracles I have performed among them. ¹²So I will send a plague among them and get rid of them. But I will cause your descendants to become a great nation. They will be a nation that is much greater and stronger than these people are."

¹³But Moses replied to Yahweh, "Please do not do that, because the people of Egypt will hear about it! You brought these Israelite people from Egypt by your great power, ¹⁴and the people of Egypt will tell that to the descendants of Canaan who live in this land. Yahweh, they have already heard about you. They know that you have been with these people and that they have seen you face to face. They have heard that your cloud is like a huge pillar that stays over them, and by that cloud you lead them during the day, and that the cloud becomes like a fire at night to give them light. ¹⁵If you kill these people all at one time, the people groups who have heard about your power will say, ¹⁶'Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land that he promised to give to them, so he killed them in the wilderness.'

¹⁷So Yahweh, now show that you are very powerful. You said, ¹⁸'I do not quickly become angry. Instead, I love people greatly, and I forgive people for having sinned and having disobeyed my laws. But I will always punish people who are guilty of doing what is wrong. When parents sin, I will punish them, but I will also punish their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren and their great-great-grandchildren.' ¹⁹So, because you love your people with a great covenant loyalty, forgive these people for the sins that they have committed, just like you have continued to forgive them ever since they left Egypt."

²⁰Then Yahweh replied, "I have forgiven them, as you requested me to. ²¹But, just as certainly as I live and that people all over the world can see my glory, I solemnly declare that ²²all these people saw my glory and all the miracles that I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, but they disobeyed me, and many times they tested whether they could continue to do evil things without my punishing them. ²³Because of that, not one of them will see the land that I promised their ancestors that I would give to them. No one who rejected me will see that land. ²⁴But Caleb, who serves me well, is different from the others. He obeys me completely. So I will bring him into that land that he has already seen, and his descendants will inherit some of it. ²⁵So, since the descendants of Amalek and Canaan who are living in the valleys in Canaan are very strong, when you leave here tomorrow, instead of traveling toward Canaan, go back along the road through the wilderness toward the Sea of Reeds."

²⁶Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²⁷"How long will the wicked people of this nation keep complaining about me? I have heard everything that they have grumbled against me. ²⁸So now tell them this: 'Just as certainly as I, Yahweh, live, I will do exactly what you said would happen. ²⁹I will cause all of you to die here in this wilderness! Because you grumbled against me, none of you who are more than twenty years old and who were counted when Moses counted everyone ³⁰will enter the land that I solemnly promised to give to you. Only Caleb and Joshua will enter that land. ³¹You said that your children would be taken from you to become slaves, but I will take them into the land, and they will enjoy living in the land that you rejected. ³²But as for you adults, you will die here in this wilderness. ³³Your children will wander around in this wilderness as shepherds for forty years. Because you adults were not loyal to me, your children will suffer until you all die in the wilderness. ³⁴You will suffer for your sins for forty years. That will be one year for each of the forty days that the twelve men explored Canaan land. And I will be like an enemy to you. ³⁵This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it! I will do these things to every one in this group that has plotted against me. They will all die right here in this wilderness!'"

³⁶⁻³⁷Then Yahweh attacked the ten men who had discouraged the people, so that they died. These were the men who had explored Canaan and then told the people that they would not be able to take over the land. It was because of the men that the people spoke against Moses. ³⁸Of the twelve men who had explored Canaan, only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

³⁹When Moses reported to the Israelite people what Yahweh had said, many of them were very sad. ⁴⁰So the people got up early the next morning and started to go toward the hill country in Canaan. They said, "We know that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land that Yahweh promised to give to us."

⁴¹But Moses said, "Yahweh commanded you to return to the desert, so why are you now disobeying him? It will not succeed. ⁴²Do not try to enter the land now! If you try, your enemies will defeat you, because Yahweh will not be with you. ⁴³When you begin to fight the descendants of Amalek and Canaan, they will slaughter you! Yahweh will abandon you, because you have abandoned him."

⁴⁴But even though Moses did not leave the camp, and the sacred chest that contained the Ten Commandments was not taken from the camp, the people began to go toward the hill country in Canaan. ⁴⁵Then the descendants of Amalek and Canaan who lived in those hills came down and attacked them; they chased them as far south as Hormah.

Chapter 15

¹Then Yahweh told Moses, ²“Tell this to the Israelite people, ‘When you arrive in the land that I am giving to you, ³you must offer to me special sacrifices which will be pleasing to me when the priest burns them on the altar. Some of them may be offerings that will be completely burned on the altar. Some of them may be to indicate that you have made a solemn promise to me. Some of them may be offerings that you yourselves have decided to make. Some of them may be offerings at one of the festivals that you celebrate each year. These offerings may be taken from your herds of cattle or from your flocks of sheep and goats. ⁴When you give these offerings, you must also bring to me a flour offering of about two liters of nice flour mixed with about a liter of olive oil. ⁵When you offer a young ram or goat for the sacrifice that will be completely burned up, or when you offer as a sacrifice of every young lamb, you should prepare a liter of wine to be used as a drink offering.

⁶When you offer a ram to be a sacrifice, you must also bring an offering of about three and four-fifths liters of finely ground flour mixed with about one and one-quarter liters of olive oil. ⁷And also pour on the altar about one and one-fifth liters of wine. While they are being burned, the smell of it will be very pleasing to me.

⁸Sometimes you will offer a young bull to be completely burned on the altar. Sometimes you will offer a sacrifice to indicate that you have made a solemn promise to me. Sometimes you will offer a sacrifice to restore fellowship with me. ⁹When you offer these sacrifices, you must also offer a flour offering of about six and one-half liters of finely ground flour mixed with about two liters of olive oil. ¹⁰Also pour on the altar two quarts of wine to be an offering. While those special gifts are being burned, the smell from it will be very pleasing to me. ¹¹Each time someone offers a bull or a ram or a male lamb or young goat to be a sacrifice, it must be done that way. ¹²You must obey these instructions for each animal that you bring to me for an offering.

¹³All of you people who have been Israelites all of your lives must obey these regulations when you offer sacrifices that will be pleasing to me when they are burned on the altar. ¹⁴If any foreigners visit you or live among you, if they also want to bring a sacrifice that will be pleasing to me when it is burned on the altar, they must obey these same instructions. ¹⁵I consider that those who have always been Israelites and those who are foreigners are equal, and so they must all obey the same instructions. All of your descendants must also continue to obey these instructions of mine. ¹⁶You Israelites and the foreigners who live among you must all obey the same instructions.”

¹⁷Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁸“Tell these instructions to the Israelite people, ‘When you arrive in the land to which I am taking you, ¹⁹and you eat the crops that are growing there, you must set some of them aside to be a sacred offering to me, and present them to me. ²⁰Each year set aside some of the first grain that you gather after you have threshed it. Bake a loaf of bread from the first flour that you grind and present it before me as a sacred offering. ²¹Every year, you and your descendants must continue to make and present to me a loaf of bread baked with flour from the first part of the grain that you harvest.

²²There may be times when you Israelites do not obey all these instructions that I have given to Moses to tell you, but not because you intended to disobey them. ²³There may be times when some of your descendants do not obey all these instructions that I have given to Moses to tell to you. ²⁴If you or they sin by forgetting to obey these instructions and none of the Israelite people realize that they were doing that, one young bull as an offering for all the people must be brought to the priest. That will be pleasing to me when it is burned on the altar. They must also bring to me a flour offering and an offering of wine, and a male goat, to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of their sin. ²⁵By offering these sacrifices, the priest will make atonement for all of you Israelite people. Then, as a result of their bringing to me an offering to be burned on the altar, you will be forgiven, because you sinned without

realizing that you were sinning. ²⁶You Israelite people, and the foreigners who are living among you, will all be forgiven.

²⁷If one person commits a sin without realizing that he was sinning, that person must bring to me a female goat to be an offering to take away that person's guilt for that sin. ²⁸The priest will offer it to be a sacrifice to remove the guilt of that person's sin, and that person will be forgiven. ²⁹You Israelites and all the foreigners who live among you must obey these same instructions.

³⁰But those who disobey my commands deliberately, both Israelites and the foreigners who live among you, have sinned against me by doing that. So they must be expelled from your camp. ³¹They have despised my commands and deliberately disobeyed them, so they must be punished for their sin by never being allowed to live among you again."

³²One day, while the Israelites were in the wilderness, some of them saw a man who was gathering firewood on the Sabbath day. ³³Those who saw him doing that brought him to Aaron and Moses and the rest of the Israelite people. ³⁴They guarded him carefully, because they did not know what to do to punish him. ³⁵Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The man must be executed. All of you must kill him by throwing stones at him outside the camp." ³⁶So they all took the man outside the camp and killed him by throwing stones at him, as Yahweh had commanded Moses that they should do.

³⁷Yahweh also said to Moses, ³⁸"Tell this to the Israelite people: 'You and all your descendants must twist threads together to make tassels, and then attach them with blue cords to the bottom edges of your clothes. ³⁹When you look at the tassels, you will remember all the instructions that I gave to you, and you will obey them. In that way, you will not be unfaithful to me. You will not be like an unfaithful prostitute who does the shameful things that she looks at and desires to do. ⁴⁰Seeing those tassels will help you to remember that you must obey all my commands and that you must be my holy people. ⁴¹Do not forget that I am Yahweh, your God. I am the one who brought you out of Egypt in order that you might belong to me. I am Yahweh, your God.'"

Chapter 16

¹One day Korah son of Izhar and a descendant of Levi's son Kohath, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, who were the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth. They were all from the tribe of Reuben. ²Those four men incited 250 other people who were leaders among the Israelite people to join them in rebelling against Moses. ³They came together to criticize Aaron and Moses. They said to them, "You two are using more authority than you should! Yahweh has set apart all of us Israelite people, and he is with all of us. So why do you act as though you were more important than the rest of us people who belong to Yahweh?"

⁴When Moses heard what they were saying, he prostrated himself on the ground. ⁵Then he said to Korah and those who were with Korah, "Tomorrow morning Yahweh will show to us whom he has chosen to be his priest, and who is holy and allowed to come near to him. Yahweh will permit only those whom he chooses to come into his presence.

⁶So Korah, tomorrow you and those who are with you must prepare your pans to burn incense. ⁷Then you must light a fire in them and burn the incense in the presence of Yahweh. Then we will see which one of us Yahweh has chosen to be his holy servant. It is you men who are descendants of Levi who are trying to use more authority than you should!"

⁸Then Moses spoke again to Korah. He said, "You men who are descendants of Levi, listen to me! ⁹You know that Yahweh, the God of Israel has chosen you Levites from the community of Israel so you can work for him at his sacred tent and serve the people. Does that seem to you like a small thing for you to do? ¹⁰Yahweh has brought you, Korah, and your fellow descendants of Levi, near to himself. Now are you demanding to become priests also?

¹¹It is really Yahweh against whom you and your fellow descendants of Levi are rebelling. Aaron is not the one about whom you are really complaining."

¹²Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come. They sent a message saying, "We will not come to you! ¹³You brought us out of Egypt, which was a very fertile land, in order to cause us to die here in this desert. That was bad. But now you are also trying to boss us, and that is worse. ¹⁴You have not given us a new land to live in, a land that has good fields and vineyards. You are only trying to blind these people. So we will not come to you."

¹⁵Then Moses became very angry. He said to Yahweh, "Do not accept the grain offerings that they have brought. I have not taken anything from them, not even one donkey, and I have never done anything wrong to them, so they have no reason to complain against me."

¹⁶Then Moses said to Korah, "You and all those who are with you must come here tomorrow and stand in front of Yahweh. Aaron will also be here. ¹⁷You and all the 250 men who are with you must each take a pan in which to burn incense, and put incense in it, to burn it to be an offering to Yahweh. Aaron will do the same thing."

¹⁸So each of those men got a pan to burn incense. They put in it incense and hot coals to light it, and then they all stood at the entrance of the sacred tent with Aaron and Moses. ¹⁹Then Korah summoned all the people who supported him and who were against Moses, and they also gathered at the entrance of the tent. Then the glory of Yahweh appeared to all of them. ²⁰Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²¹"Get away from all these people, in order that I can get rid of them immediately!"

²²But Aaron and Moses prostrated themselves on the ground. They pleaded with Yahweh, saying, "God, you are the one who caused all these people to live. Only one of these men has sinned. So, is it right for you to be angry with all the people?"

²³Yahweh said to Moses, ²⁴"Okay, but tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

²⁵So Moses stood up and went to the tents of Dathan and Abiram. The Israelite leaders followed him. ²⁶He told the people, "Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything that belongs to them! If you touch anything, you will die because of their sins!" ²⁷So all the people moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram came out of their tents with their wives and children and babies, and stood at the entrance of their tents.

²⁸Then Moses said, "I was not the one who decided to do all these things that I have done. It was Yahweh who chose me and sent me to do them. And now he will prove that to you. ²⁹If these men die in a normal way, then it will be clear that Yahweh did not choose me. ³⁰But if Yahweh does something that has never happened before, if he causes the ground that is under their feet to open up and swallow these men and their families and all their possessions, and they fall into the opening and are buried while they are still alive, then you will know that these men have insulted Yahweh."

³¹As soon as Moses said this, the ground split open beneath those men. ³²It swallowed those men and their families and all those who were standing there with Korah and all of their possessions. ³³They fell into the opening in the ground while they were still alive, and all their possessions fell into the opening also. They disappeared, and the ground closed back up again. ³⁴They screamed as they fell, and all the people who were standing nearby heard them scream. The people were terrified and cried out as they ran away, saying, "We do not want the ground to swallow us, also!"

³⁵And then a fire from Yahweh came down from the sky and burned up the 250 men who were burning the incense!

³⁶Then Yahweh said to Moses, ³⁷"Tell Aaron's son Eleazar to take the pans that had incense in them away from the fire and to scatter the burning coals. The pans that those men were carrying are holy because they burned incense to me in them. ³⁸Those men have now died because of their sin. So Eleazar must take their pans and hammer the metal to make it become very thin. He must make a covering for the altar with that metal. Those pans were used to offer incense to me, so they are holy. What happened to those pans will now warn the Israelite people."

³⁹⁻⁴⁰So Eleazar the priest collected the 250 pans for burning incense that had been used by the men who died in the fire. He hammered the pans very thin to make a covering for the altar, as Yahweh told Moses should be done. That warned the Israelites that only those who were descendants of Aaron were permitted to burn incense as an offering to Yahweh. If anyone else did that, the same thing would happen to him as happened to Korah and those with him.

⁴¹But the following morning, all the Israelite people started to complain against Aaron and Moses saying "You have killed many people who belonged to Yahweh!"

⁴²When all the people gathered together to protest about what Aaron and Moses had done, they looked at the sacred tent and saw that the sacred cloud had covered it, and the glory of Yahweh had appeared. ⁴³Aaron and Moses went and stood in front of the sacred tent. ⁴⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁴⁵"Get away from these people, in order that I can get rid of them immediately without injuring you two!" But Aaron and Moses prostrated themselves on the ground and prayed.

⁴⁶Moses said to Aaron, "Quickly take another pan and put in it some burning coals from the altar. Put incense in the pan, and carry it out among the people to atone for the sins of the people. Yahweh is very angry with them, and I know that a severe plague has already started among them." ⁴⁷So Aaron did what Moses told him. He took the burning incense out among the people. The plague had already started to strike the people, but Aaron continued to burn the incense to make atonement for the sins of the people. ⁴⁸He stood between the people who had already died and those who were still alive, and then the plague stopped. ⁴⁹But 14,700 people had already died from that plague, in addition to the people who died with Korah. ⁵⁰Then after the plague had ended, Aaron and Moses returned to the entrance of the sacred tent.

Chapter 17

¹Then Yahweh said to Moses, ²"Tell the Israelite people to bring to you twelve walking sticks. They should bring one from each of the leaders of the twelve tribes. You should carve each leader's name on his stick. ³There must be one stick for the leader of each tribe, so you must carve Aaron's name on the stick for the tribe of Levi. ⁴Put those walking sticks inside the sacred tent, in front of the sacred chest that has in it the tablets on which the Ten Commandments are written. That is the place where I always talk with you. ⁵Buds will sprout on the stick of the man whom I have chosen to be the priest. When the people see that, they will stop their constantly complaining about you because they will realize that he is the one whom I have chosen."

⁶So Moses told the people what Yahweh had said. Then each of the twelve Israelite leaders, including Aaron, brought his walking stick to Moses. ⁷Moses placed the sticks inside the sacred tent in front of the sacred chest.

⁸The following morning, when he went into the tent, he saw that Aaron's stick, which represented the tribe of Levi, had sprouted. It had produced leaves and blossoms, and it had also produced almonds that were ripe! ⁹Moses brought all the sticks out of the sacred tent and showed them to the people. Each of the twelve leaders took back his own stick.

¹⁰Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Put Aaron's stick in front of the sacred chest, and let it stay there permanently. That will be a warning to people who want to rebel against me. Then no more people will die because of complaining against me." ¹¹So Moses did what Yahweh had commanded.

¹²Then the Israelite people said to Moses, "We are going to die! All of us are surely going to die! ¹³Everyone who comes close to Yahweh's sacred tent dies. Are the rest of us going to die, also?"

Chapter 18

¹Yahweh said to Aaron, "You and your sons and the other members of your father's family are the ones who will be punished if anything bad happens to the things inside the sacred tent. And you and your sons will be punished if any priest does something bad. ²Require that those who belong to your tribe, the tribe of Levi, must assist you and your sons while you perform your work at the sacred tent. ³But while they do that work, they must not go near the sacred items inside the tent or near the altar. If they do that, they will die, and you will die, too! ⁴They may assist you in doing all the work to take care of the sacred tent, but no one else is permitted to come near the place where you are working.

⁵You are the ones who will do the sacred work inside the sacred tent and at the altar. If you obey these instructions, I will not become very angry with the Israelite people again. ⁶I myself have chosen the descendants of Levi from the other Israelites in order that they may be your special helpers. They are like a gift that I have given you to work at the sacred tent. ⁷But it is you and your sons, who are the priests, who must perform all the details I have commanded concerning the altar and with what happens inside the Very Holy Place. I am giving to you this work of serving as priests. So anyone else who tries to do that work must be executed."

⁸Yahweh also said to Aaron, "I myself have appointed you to take care of all the sacred offerings that the Israelite people bring to me. I have given all these sacred offerings to you and to your sons. You and your descendants will get a share of these offerings permanently. ⁹The parts of the offerings that are not completely burned on the altar belong to you. Those parts of the sacred offerings, including the flour offerings, the offerings to make atonement for sins and to remove the guilt of sins, I require that they be set apart. I require that they be given to you and to your sons. ¹⁰You are to eat it as a most holy offering. Every male in your clan may eat it. But you must have respect for those offerings because they are holy to you.

¹¹The priests lift up high the sacred offerings while they are standing in front of the altar. All of those offerings that the Israelites present to me belong to you and your sons and daughters. They will always be your share. All the members of your family who have performed the rituals to cause them to be acceptable to me are permitted to eat from these offerings.

¹²I am also giving to you the first food that people harvest each year and bring to me—the best olive oil and new wine and grain. ¹³All of the first crops that people harvest and bring to me belong to you. Anyone in your family who has performed the ritual to become acceptable to me is permitted to eat that food.

¹⁴Everything in Israel that is devoted to me, will be yours. ¹⁵The firstborn males, both humans and domestic animals, that are offered to me, will be yours. But people must buy back their firstborn sons and the firstborn animals that may not be used for sacrifices. ¹⁶They must buy them back when they are one month old. The price that they must pay for each one is five pieces of silver. They must weigh the silver on the scales that are in the sacred tent.

¹⁷I do not permit you to buy back the firstborn cattle or sheep or goats. They are holy and I require you to set them apart for me. Slaughter them and sprinkle their blood on the altar. Then completely burn the fat of those animals on the altar to be an offering to me. The smell as they burn will be very pleasing to me. ¹⁸The meat from those offerings will be yours, just like the breast and right thigh of animals that are presented to me to restore fellowship with me, as the priest lifts them up high in front of the altar, are yours. ¹⁹Anything that the Israelite people present to me as holy gifts, I am giving to you. They are for you and your sons and daughters to eat. They will always be your share. This is an agreement that I am making with you, an agreement that will last forever. I am also making this agreement with your descendants."

²⁰Yahweh also said to Aaron, "You priests will not receive any of the land or the property like the other Israelite people will receive. I am what you will receive.

²¹When the Israelite people bring to me a tenth of all the crops and of their newborn animals, I will give that to you descendants of Levi. That will be your payment for the work you do at the sacred tent. ²²The other Israelites must

not go near that tent. If they go near it, I will consider that their doing that is a sin, and they will die for committing that sin. ²³Only the descendants of Levi are permitted to work at the sacred tent, and they will be punished if anything bad happens to it. That is a law that will never be changed. You descendants of Levi will not receive any land to own among all the other Israelite people. ²⁴The Israelites must present one tenth of all their crops and animals as offerings to me, and that is what I give to the descendants of Levi so they can provide for themselves. This is why I said that I will not give the descendants of Levi any land to own.

²⁵Yahweh said to Moses, ²⁶“Tell this to the descendants of Levi, ‘When you receive one tenth of all the crops and animals from the Israelite people, you must present one tenth of all that to me to be a sacred offering,’ ²⁷just like the other Israelites present one tenth of the grain and wine that they produce. ²⁸You must present to me one tenth of all that you receive from the Israelite people. That will be your sacred offering to me. You must present it to Aaron. ²⁹Select the best parts of the things that are given to you to present them to me.’

³⁰Also, tell this to the descendants of Levi, ‘When you present those best portions of grain and wine as your offering to me, I will consider that those gifts are as though they came from your own grain and wine. ³¹You descendants of Levi and your families are permitted to eat the rest of that food, and you may eat it wherever you want to, because it is your payment for the work that you do at the sacred tent. ³²If you give to the priests the best portions of what you receive, you will not be punished by me for accepting one tenth of the gifts that the people bring to me. But you must consider those gifts to be sacred. If you sin by eating those things in ways that are contrary to these regulations that I have given to you, you will be executed.”

Chapter 19

¹Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²“I am now giving to you another regulation. Tell the Israelite people to bring to you one reddish brown cow that has no defects. It must be an animal that has never been used for plowing ground. ³Give it to Eleazar the priest. He must take it outside the camp and someone will slaughter it. ⁴And Eleazar must dip one of his fingers in the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times on the ground near the sacred tent. ⁵Then, while Eleazar watches, the cow must be burned completely—its hide, its meat, the rest of its blood, and even its dung. ⁶Eliezer then must take a stick of cedar wood, a stalk of a plant named hyssop, and some scarlet yarn, and throw them into the fire where the cow is burning.

⁷Then the priest must wash his clothes and bathe. After doing that, he may return to the camp. But he will be unfit for doing any sacred work until that evening. ⁸The man who burns the cow must also wash his clothes and bathe, and he will also be unacceptable to me until that evening.

⁹Then someone who has not become unacceptable to me must gather up the ashes of the cow and put them in a sacred place outside the camp. The ashes must be kept there for the people of Israel to use when they mix it with water for the ritual to remove the guilt of sin. ¹⁰The man who gathers up the ashes of the cow must also wash his clothes, and he also will be unfit to do anymore sacred work until that evening. That is a regulation that will never be changed. It must be obeyed by you Israelite people and by any foreigners who live among you.

¹¹All those who touch a corpse will be unacceptable to me for seven days. ¹²On the third day and on the seventh day after touching a corpse, in order to become acceptable to me again, they must sprinkle on themselves some of that water for removing the guilt of their sin. If they do not do that on both of those days, they will continue to be unacceptable to me. ¹³All those who touch a corpse, and do not perform in the correct way the ritual to become acceptable to me again, defile Yahweh's sacred tent. They will no longer be permitted to live among the Israelite people. The water to remove the guilt of sin was not sprinkled on them, so they continue to be unacceptable to me.

¹⁴There is another practice that must be performed when someone dies inside a tent. All those who were inside that tent when that person died or who enter that tent will be unacceptable to me for seven days. ¹⁵Any jars that are inside that tent that are not covered are not permitted to be used. ¹⁶If someone who is out in a field touches

the corpse of someone who was murdered, or who died from natural causes, or if someone touches a bone from some human or touches a grave, that person will be unacceptable to me for seven days.

¹⁷For someone like that to become acceptable to me again, some of the ashes from the cow that was burned must be taken and put in a jar. Then some fresh water must be poured over the ashes. ¹⁸Then someone who has not become unacceptable to me must take a stalk of a plant named hyssop and dip it into the water. Then that person must sprinkle some of the water on the tent where that person died, on the things that are in the tent, and on the people who were in the tent. He must also sprinkle some of that water on any person who touched a human bone or who touched a person who had been killed, or who touched a person who died of natural causes, or who touched a grave. ¹⁹On the third day and on the seventh day after that, the person who is acceptable to me must sprinkle some of that water on those who have become unacceptable to me. On the seventh day, the people who are performing that ritual to become acceptable to me again must wash their clothes and bathe. If they do that, on that evening they will become acceptable to me again.

²⁰If those who have become unacceptable to me do not become acceptable to me again by doing this, they will no longer be permitted to live among to the Israelite people, because they have defiled my sacred tent. They did not sprinkle on themselves the water that removes the guilt of their sins, so they remain unacceptable to me. ²¹That is a law for the Israelite people that will never be changed. Those who sprinkle that water on themselves must then wash their clothes. And anyone who touches that water which removes guilt for sins will remain unacceptable to God until that evening.

²²Anything and any person that someone who has become unacceptable to me has touched will remain unacceptable to me until that evening."

Chapter 20

¹In the first month of the next year, the Israelite people traveled to the wilderness of Zin and camped near Kadesh. While they were there, Moses' sister Miriam died and was buried there.

²There was no water for the people to drink there, so they came to Aaron and Moses. ³They complained and said, "We wish that we had died in front of Yahweh's sacred tent when our fellow Israelites died! ⁴Did you bring us, who are Yahweh's people, into this desert to die along with our livestock? ⁵Why did you bring us from Egypt to this miserable place? There is no grain, there are no figs, no grapes, and no pomegranates here. And there is no water for us to drink!"

⁶Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the sacred tent and prostrated themselves on the ground. Just then Yahweh appeared to them with his bright glory. ⁷When Yahweh appeared in glory, he said, ⁸"You and Aaron must take Aaron's walking stick with you and gather all the people together. While the people are watching, command that large rock over there to pour out water. Water for the people will flow from it. All they and all their livestock will have enough water to drink."

⁹So Moses did what Yahweh told him to do. He took Aaron's walking stick from the place in the sacred tent where it was kept. ¹⁰Then Moses and Aaron summoned all the people to gather at the rock. Then Moses shouted to them, "All you rebellious people, listen! Is it necessary for us to bring to you water from this rock?" ¹¹Then Moses raised his hand and instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock two times with the walking stick. And water gushed out. So all the people and their livestock drank all the water that they wanted.

¹²But Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, "You did not trust me or honor me before the people of Israel, and so you will not lead them into the land I have given to them!"

¹³Later this place was called the Meribah, which means 'arguing', because there the Israelite people argued against Yahweh, and there he showed his honor and holiness to them by giving them water.

¹⁴While the people were at Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom to tell him this,

"Your relatives, the Israelite people, are sending you this message. You know the many troubles that have happened to us. ¹⁵You know that our ancestors went down to Egypt. You know that they stayed there for many years. They suffered because the rulers of Egypt caused them to become their slaves and to work very hard.

¹⁶But when they called out to Yahweh, he heard them and sent an angel who brought them out of Egypt. Now we have set up our tents here at Kadesh, a town on the border of your land. ¹⁷Please allow us to travel through your country. We will be careful to not walk through your fields and your vineyards. We will not even drink water from your wells. As we travel, we will stay on the king's highway, the main road that goes from the south to the north, and we will not leave that road until we have crossed the border of your country in the north."

¹⁸But the king of Edom refused. He replied, "Stay out of my country! If you try to enter it, I will send my army to attack you!"

¹⁹The Israelite messengers replied, "If we travel through your country, we will stay on the main road. If we and any of our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We want only to travel through your country. We do not want anything else."

²⁰But the king replied, "No! Stay out of our country! We will not allow you to travel through our land!" Then he sent the strongest soldiers in his army to prevent the Israelites from entering his country.

²¹So, because the king of Edom refused to allow the Israelites to travel through his country, the Israelites turned and traveled a different way.

²²The Israelite people left Kadesh. They went to Mount Hor, ²³which is at the border of Edom. While they were there, Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²⁴"It is time for Aaron to die. He will not enter the land that I am giving to you Israelites, because the two of you disobeyed me when I told you to speak to the rock to cause the water to flow at Meribah. ²⁵Now you, Moses, take Aaron and his son Eleazar up on Mount Hor. ²⁶There you must remove Aaron's clothes that he wears when he does the works of a priest, and put them on his son, Eleazar. Aaron will die up there."

²⁷So Moses did what Yahweh commanded. The three of them climbed up Mount Hor, while all the Israelite people watched. ²⁸At the top of the mountain, Moses took off the clothes that Aaron wore while he did the work of a priest and put them on Eleazar. Then Aaron died there on the top of the mountain, and Eleazar and Moses went back down. ²⁹When the Israelite people realized that Aaron had died, they all mourned for him for thirty days.

Chapter 21

¹The king of the city of Arad lived in the area where the Canaanites lived, in the southern Judean wilderness. He heard a report that the Israelites were approaching on the road to Atharim village. So his army attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. ²Then the Israelites declared this solemnly, "Yahweh, if you will help us to defeat these people, we will completely destroy all their towns." ³Yahweh heard what they requested, and he enabled them to defeat the army of this Canaan people group. The Israelite soldiers killed all the people and destroyed their towns. Ever since that time, that place has been called Hormah which means "destruction."

⁴Then the Israelites left Mount Hor and traveled on the road toward the Sea of Reeds, in order to go around the land of Edom. But the people became impatient along the way, ⁵and they began to grumble against God and against Moses. They said, "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in this desert? There is nothing to eat here, and nothing to drink. And we detest this lousy manna food!"

⁶So Yahweh sent poisonous snakes among them. Many of the people were bitten by the snakes and died. ⁷Then the people came to Moses and cried out, saying, "We now know that we have sinned against Yahweh and against you. Pray to Yahweh, asking that he will take away the snakes!" So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸Then Yahweh told him, "Make a model of a poisonous snake, and attach it to the top of a pole. If those who are bitten by the snakes look at that model, they will recover." ⁹So Moses made a snake from bronze and attached it to the top of a pole. Then, when those who had been bitten by a snake looked at the bronze snake, they recovered!

¹⁰Then the Israelites traveled to Oboth and camped there. ¹¹Then they left Oboth and went to Iye Abarim in the wilderness on the eastern border of Moab. ¹²From there they traveled to the valley where the Zered riverbed is, and camped there. ¹³Then they traveled to the north side of the Arnon River. That area is in the wilderness next to the land where the Amorites live. The Arnon River is the boundary between Moab and where the Amorites live.

¹⁴That is why it is written down in the book of the wars of Yahweh,

"Waheb in Suphah, and the ravines there,

and the Arnon River

¹⁵and the ravines there,

which extend as far as Ar village on the border of Moab."

¹⁶From there the Israelites traveled to Beer. There was a well there where Yahweh previously had said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." ¹⁷There the Israelites sang this song:

"O well, give us water!

Sing about this well!

¹⁸Sing about this well

which our leaders dug;

they dug out the dirt with their royal scepters and their walking sticks."

Then the Israelites left that wilderness and went through Mattanah. ¹⁹The Israelites also went through Nahaliel, and Bamoth village. ²⁰Then they went to the valley in Moab where Mount Pisgah rises above the wilderness.

²¹Then the Israelites sent messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amor people group. This was the message that they gave him,

²²"Allow us to travel through your country. We will stay on the king's highway, the main road that goes from the south to the north, until we have finished traveling through your land. We will not walk through any field or vineyard, or drink water from your wells."

²³But King Sihon refused. He would not allow them to walk through his land. Instead, he sent his whole army to attack the Israelites in the desert. They attacked the Israelites at Jahaz village. ²⁴But the Israelites completely defeated them and occupied their land, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north. They stopped at the border of the land where the Ammon people group lived, because the Ammon army was defending the border strongly. ²⁵So the Israelites occupied all the cities and towns where the Amorites lived, and some of the Israelites began to live in them. They occupied the city of Heshbon and the nearby villages. ²⁶Heshbon was the capital of the country. It was the city where King Sihon ruled. His army had previously defeated the army of the king of Moab, and then his people had begun to live in all of the land of Moab as far as the Arnon River in the south.

²⁷For that reason, one of the poets wrote long ago,

"Come to Heshbon, the city where King Sihon ruled.

We want the city to be restored.

²⁸A fire blazed from Heshbon.

It burned down the city of Ar in Moab.

It destroyed everything on the hills along the Arnon River.

²⁹You people of Moab, terrible things have happened to you!

You people who worship your god Chemosh have been annihilated!

The men who worshiped Chemosh have run away and are now refugees,

and the women who worshiped him have been captured by the army of Sihon, the king of the Amor people group.

³⁰But we have defeated those descendants of Amor,

all the way from Heshbon in the north to the city of Dibon in the south.

We have completely obliterated them as far as the cities of Nophah and Medeba.”

³¹So the Israelite people began to live in the land where the Amorites lived.

³²After Moses sent some men to explore the area near the city of Jazer, Israelite people began to live in all the towns in that region and expelled the Amor people group who lived there. ³³Then they turned north toward the region of Bashan, but King Og of Bashan and all his army attacked them at the city of Edrei.

³⁴Yahweh said to Moses, “Do not be afraid of Og, because I am going to enable your men to defeat him and his army, and to take possession of all his land. You will do to him what you did to Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who ruled in Heshbon.”

³⁵And that is what happened. The Israelites defeated Og’s army, and killed King Og and his sons and all his people. Not a person survived! And then the Israelites began to live in their land.

Chapter 22

¹Then the Israelites traveled west to the plain of Moab that was in the Valley of the Jordan River, across the river from Jericho.

²But King Balak son of Zippor, who ruled Moab, found out what the Israelites had done to the Amor people group.

³When he saw that the Israelites were very numerous, he and his people became terrified.

⁴So the king of Moab went to the leaders of the Midian people group and said to them, “This huge group of Israelites will wipe out everything around them, like an ox devours grass!”

Balak was the king of Moab. ⁵He sent messengers to a prophet named Balaam, who was living in his own area, in Pethor, near the Euphrates River. He sent this message to request that Balaam would come to help him,

“A huge group of people has arrived here from Egypt. It looks like they are covering the entire land! And they have begun to live close to us. ⁶Because they are very powerful, we are afraid of them. So please come and curse them for me. Then my army may be able to defeat them and expel them from the land where they are now living. I know that good things will happen to the people whom you bless, and disasters will happen to the people whom you curse.”

⁷Balak’s messengers, who were leaders of both the Moab and Midian people groups, took money with them to pay Balaam in order that he would come and curse the Israelites. They went to Balaam and told him what Balak had said.

⁸Balaam said, "Stay here tonight. Tomorrow morning I will tell you whatever Yahweh tells me that I should say to you."

So the leaders from Moab stayed there that night. ⁹During the night, God appeared to Balaam and asked him, "Who are these men who are staying with you?"

¹⁰Balaam replied, "Balak, the king of Moab, sent these men to tell me this message, ¹¹A huge group of people has come from Egypt, and they have spread all over this area. Please come immediately to curse them. Then I may be able to defeat them and expel them from this area."

¹²God replied to Balaam, "Do not go with them! I have blessed those people, so you must not curse them!"

¹³The next morning, Balaam got up and told Balak's men, "Go back home. But go by yourselves, because Yahweh is not allowing me to go with you."

¹⁴So the men from Moab returned to King Balak and they reported to him, "Balaam refused to come with us."

¹⁵But Balak sent another group of leaders to Balaam. It was a group that was larger and they were more important than the men in the first group. ¹⁶They went to Balaam and told him this,

"This is what King Balak says, 'Please do not allow anything to hinder you from coming here. ¹⁷I will pay you a lot of money if you come, and I will do anything that you ask me to do. Just come and curse these Israelite people for me!'"

¹⁸But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak would give me a palace filled with silver and gold, I would not do anything to disobey Yahweh, my God. ¹⁹But stay here one more night, like the other messengers did, and I will find out if Yahweh has anything more to say to me."

²⁰That night God appeared to Balaam again and said to him, "These men have come to request that you go back with them, so you may go with them, but do only what I tell you to do!"

²¹So the next morning, Balaam put a saddle on his donkey and he departed with two of his servants along with the men from Moab. ²²Even though God had given Balaam permission to go, he was still angry. So he sent one of his angels to Balaam. This angel stood in the road to block Balaam's path. As Balaam and the two servants were riding on their donkeys, ²³Balaam's donkey saw the angel. The angel was standing in the road and was holding a sword in his hand, but Balaam did not see him.

Balaam's donkey turned off the road into a field. So Balaam struck the donkey and forced it to go back onto the road. ²⁴Then the angel stood in a place where the road was very narrow, between two vineyards, with walls on each side of the road. ²⁵When the donkey saw the angel standing there, it walked very close to the wall to try to get past the angel. As a result, it bashed Balaam's foot against the wall. So Balaam struck the donkey again.

²⁶Then the angel went further along the road and stood at a place that was extremely narrow, with the result that the donkey could not get past at all. ²⁷This time, when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down on the ground with Balaam sitting on top of it. Balaam became extremely angry, and he struck the donkey again with his walking stick.

²⁸Then Yahweh enabled the donkey to speak! It said to Balaam, "What bad thing have I done to you that caused you to strike me three times?"

²⁹Balaam shouted, "I struck you because you have caused me to appear to be foolish! If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!"

³⁰But the donkey answered, "I am your own donkey, the one that you have always ridden! Have I ever done anything like this previously?"

Balaam said, "No."

³¹Then Yahweh enabled Balaam to see the angel standing on the road, holding a sword in his hand. Balaam realized that it was an angel and prostrated himself on the ground in front of the angel.

³²The angel asked him, "Why did you strike your donkey three times? I have come to block your path because what you are planning to do is wrong. ³³Three times your donkey saw me and turned away from me. If it had not done that, I would certainly have killed you already, but I would have allowed the donkey to live."

³⁴Then Balaam said to the angel, "I have sinned. But I did not realize that you were standing there, trying to block my path. So if you do not want me to continue going, I will return home."

³⁵But the angel replied, "I will allow you to go with these men, but you must say only what I tell you to say!"

So Balaam went on with the leaders whom Balak had sent.

³⁶When King Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went to meet him at a city in Moab that is located alongside the Arnon River, near the border of his own land. ³⁷When he arrived where Balaam was, he said to him, "I sent you a message saying that you should come immediately! Why did you not come? Did you think that I was not able to pay you a lot of money for coming?"

³⁸Balaam replied, "I have come here now, but I am not able to say anything that I want to. I will say only the words that God tells me to say."

³⁹Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. ⁴⁰There Balak killed some cattle and sheep as sacrifices, and offered parts of the meat to Balaam and the leaders who were with him. ⁴¹They slept there, and the next morning Balak took Balaam part way up the mountain to Bamoth Baal village. From there, they could see some of the Israelite people who were down below.

Chapter 23

¹Balaam said to King Balak, "Build here seven altars for me. Then kill seven young bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice." ²So Balak did that. And then he and Balaam each burned a young bull and a ram as a sacrifice on each altar.

³Then Balaam said to Balak, "You stand here close to your burned offerings, and I will go and ask Yahweh if he has something else to tell me. Then I will tell you what he says to me."

Then Balaam went by himself to the top of a hill. ⁴While he was on the top of the hill, God appeared to him there. Balaam said to him, "We have built seven altars, and I have killed and burned a young bull and a ram as a sacrifice to you on each altar."

⁵Then Yahweh gave Balaam a message to give to King Balak. Then he said, "Go back and tell him what I told you."

⁶When Balaam returned to Balak, Balak was standing with the leaders from Moab beside the offerings he had burned on the altar. ⁷This is the message that Balaam told them,

"Balak summoned me to come here from Aram;

the king of Moab brought me here from the hills at the eastern side of Aram.

He said, 'Come and curse the descendants of Jacob for me!

Come and say that bad things will happen to these Israelite people!'

⁸But how can I curse people whom God has not cursed?

How can I fight against people against whom Yahweh does not fight?

⁹I have seen them from the tops of the rocky peaks,
I have seen them from the hills.
I see that they are a group of people who live by themselves.
They have separated themselves from other nations.

¹⁰Who can count the descendants of Jacob, as numerous as particles of dust!
Who can count even a fourth of the number of the Israelite people?
I wish that I will die like righteous people die.
I hope that I will die peacefully like they will die."

¹¹Then Balak said, "What have you done to me? I brought you here to curse my enemies, but instead you have blessed them!"

¹²But Balaam replied, "I can say only what Yahweh tells me to say. I cannot say anything else."

¹³Then King Balak told Balaam, "Come with me to another place. There you will see only part of the Israelite people, and you will be able to curse those people for me." ¹⁴So Balak took Balaam to a field on the top of Mount Pisgah. There, again he built seven altars and offered a young bull and a ram as a sacrifice on each altar.

¹⁵Then Balaam said to the king, "Stand here close to your burned offerings, while I go and talk with Yahweh."

¹⁶So Balaam did that, and Yahweh appeared to Balaam again and gave him another message. Then he said, "Go back to Balak and tell him that message."

¹⁷So Balaam returned to where the king and the leaders from Moab were standing, next to the altar where Balak had burned the sacrifices. Balak asked him, "What did Yahweh say?"

¹⁸Then Balaam told him this message,

"Balak, listen carefully,
hear what I have to say, you son of Zippor!

¹⁹God is not a human being.
Humans lie, but God never lies.
He never changes his mind, as humans do.
Whatever he has said that he will do, he does.
Whatever he has promised to do, he has done it.

²⁰He commanded me to request him to bless the Israelites,
So he has blessed them, and I cannot change that.

²¹Yahweh their God is with them;
the people shout that he is their true king.
So the descendants of Jacob will not be harmed,
they will not endure trouble without God.

²²God brought them out slavery in Egypt

and has led them through the wilderness with strength like a wild ox.

²³When people curse the descendants of Jacob, they will not be harmed,

when people work sorcery on them, it will have no power.

So now people will say about the descendants of Jacob,

'God has done wonderful things for the Israelites!'

²⁴They are very strong, like lionesses that are ready to attack other animals.

They stand firm like lions.

The lions refuse to rest until they have killed and eaten their prey

and drunk the blood of the animals they slaughtered."

²⁵Then Balak said to Balaam, "If you will not curse them, then I certainly do not want you to bless them!"

²⁶But Balaam replied, "I told you that I must do only what Yahweh tells me to do!"

²⁷Then King Balak said to Balaam, "Come with me; I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to allow you to curse them from that place." ²⁸So Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor where they could look down and see the Israelites in the desert.

²⁹Balaam again told Balak, "Build me seven altars again and kill seven young bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice."

³⁰So Balak did what Balaam told him to do. He burned a young bull and a ram on each altar as sacrifices.

Chapter 24

¹Balaam now realized that Yahweh wanted to bless the Israelite people, not curse them. So he did not use magic like a shaman would do to find out what Yahweh wanted, as he often did. Instead, he turned toward the desert.

²He saw the Israelite people camped there in their tents, with each tribe gathered in one group. Then the Spirit of God came upon him, ³and this is the prophetic message that he gave to Balak:

"I, Balaam son of Beor, am giving this prophecy.

This prophecy that I speak is as a man who sees what will happen in the future clearly speaks.

⁴I hear this message from God.

I see a vision from the one who is all-powerful.

My eyes are open as I prostrate myself in front of him.

⁵You descendants of Jacob, your tents are very beautiful!

The places where you live are lovely!

⁶Your tents are spread out in front of me like groves of palm trees in valleys,

like gardens alongside a river.

They are like strong aloe trees that Yahweh has planted,

like strong cedar trees that grow along the rivers.

⁷Your water buckets will always be full.

The seeds that you plant will always have plenty of water to make them grow.

The Israelites' king will be greater than King Agag.

The kingdom that he rules will be honored.

⁸God brought them out of Egypt,

leading them along with his great power that is like a wild ox.

God devastates all the nations that oppose him.

He breaks all those people's bones into pieces,

and shoots them with his arrows.

⁹The Israelites are like lions that crouch and lie down, ready to spring on their prey,

like lionesses that are resting.

No one would dare to arouse them!

God will bless everyone who blesses you Israelites,

and he will curse everyone who curses you."

¹⁰Then King Balak was extremely angry with Balaam. He showed with his hands that he was very angry, and he shouted, saying, "I summoned you here to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times! ¹¹So now, get out of here! Go back home! I said that I would pay you a lot of money if you cursed them, but Yahweh has prevented you from getting any pay!"

¹²Balaam said to Balak, "Do you not remember what I told the messengers that you sent to me? I said, ¹³Even if Balak would give me a palace filled with silver and gold, I would not disobey Yahweh. I cannot do anything bad or anything that is good that he does not approve of.' And I told you that I could say only what Yahweh says to me.

¹⁴So yes, I will return to my people, but first, allow me to tell you what will happen to you Moab people in the future."

¹⁵Then Balaam said this to Balak:

"I, Balaam, son of Beor, am again giving a prophecy.

This prophecy that I speak is again as a man who sees what will happen in the future clearly speaks.

¹⁶I hear a message from God;

I know things that God, who lives in heaven, has revealed to me.

I see a vision from the one who is all-powerful.

My eyes are open as I prostrate myself in front of him.

¹⁷The things that I see in the vision are not going to happen now.

I see things that God will cause to happen in the future.

A man who is a descendant of Jacob will appear like a star;

a king who holds a scepter will be one of the Israelite people.

He will crush the heads of you people of Moab;

he will wipe out the descendants of Seth.

¹⁸The Israelites will occupy Edom,

and they will conquer their enemies who live near Mount Seir.

The Israelite people will be victorious.

¹⁹A ruler will come who is a descendant of Jacob.

He will get rid of the people who still live in the city where Balaam first met Balak."

²⁰Then Balaam looked out over where the Amalek people group lived, and he prophesied this,

"The Amalek people group were the greatest nation,

but they will be wiped out."

²¹Then he looked out over the area where the Kenite people group lived, and he prophesied this,

"You think that the place where you live is secure

like a nest that is made in the cliffs,

²²but you will be wiped out

when the army of Assyria conquers you."

²³Balaam ended his prophecies by saying,

"Also, who can survive when God does all these things?

²⁴Ships will come from the Island of Cyprus,

and the men in those ships will defeat the armies of Assyria and Eber.

But God will get rid of those men, too."

²⁵Then Balaam and Balak returned to their homes.

Chapter 25

¹While the Israelites were camped at a place called Acacia Grove, some of the men became unfaithful to God by sleeping with some of the women of the Moab people group who lived in that area. ²Then those women invited the men to come when the sacrifices were being offered to their gods. The Israelite men accepted. They went to the feasts with the women and worshiped the gods of the Moab people group. ³By doing that, the Israelite people joined the women in worshiping the god Baal who the Moab people group thought lived on Mount Peor. That caused Yahweh to become very angry with his people, and he sent a severe plague on many of the Israelite people.

⁴Yahweh said this to Moses: "Seize all the leaders of those who are doing this and execute them while I am watching. Do that in the daytime. After you do that, I will no longer be angry with the Israelite people."

⁵So Moses said to the other Israelite leaders, "Each of you must execute your men who have joined others in worshiping Baal."

⁶But later, while many people were crying at the entrance of the sacred tent, one of the Israelite men brought a woman from the Midian people group into his tent and started to sleep with her. Moses and all the people heard of it. ⁷When Phinehas, who was a grandson of Aaron, heard this he rose up from among the community, grabbed a spear. ⁸Then he rushed into the man's tent. He thrust the spear completely through the man's body and into the woman's belly and killed both of them. When he did that, the plague that had started to strike the Israelites stopped. ⁹But twenty-four thousand people had already died from that plague.

¹⁰Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹¹"Phinehas has caused me to stop being angry with the Israelite people, by being as eager as I am to stop this sinful behavior. I was ready to get rid of all the Israelite people because I was extremely angry, but Phinehas has prevented me from doing that. ¹²Now tell him that I am making a special peace agreement with him. ¹³In this agreement, I am promising to give to him and to his descendants the right to be priests. I am doing this because he showed that he was very eager to honor me, his God, by stopping this sinful behavior. He has satisfied my holy righteousness against the sinfulness of Israel by causing me to forgive them for their sin."

¹⁴The Israelite man who was killed with the woman of the Moab people group was named Zimri son of Salu, who was the leader of a family from the tribe of Simeon. ¹⁵The woman's name was Kozbi. She was the daughter of Zur, who was the leader of one of the clans of the Midian people group.

¹⁶Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹⁷"Take your men and attack the Midian people group and kill them. ¹⁸They have become your enemies, because they tricked you Israelite people and induced many of you to worship Baal, and because one of your men slept with Kozbi, who was the daughter of a leader of the Midian people group. She was killed at the time the plague started because of the people who sinned at Mount Peor."

Chapter 26

¹After the plague ended, Yahweh said to Eleazar and Moses, ²"Count all the people of Israel again. Write down the names of all the men who are at least 20 years old who are able to fight in battles, along with their family names."

³So while the Israelites were on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho, Eleazar and Moses told this to the Israelite leaders, ⁴"Write down the names of all the Israelite men who are at least 20 years old, as Yahweh has commanded us."

So they did that, and this is a record of all the descendants of Jacob who came out of Egypt who were still alive.

⁵⁻⁷These are the descendants of Reuben, Jacob's oldest son:

the Hanokites descended from his son Hanok,

the Palluites descended from his son Pallu,

the Hezronites descended from his son Hezron,

the Carmites descended from his son Carmi.

The Israelite leaders counted 43,730 men from the tribe of Reuben. ⁸Pallu's son was Eliab ⁹and his grandsons were Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram were the leaders who joined with Korah to conspire against Aaron and Moses and rebelled against Yahweh.

¹⁰But the earth opened up and swallowed them and Korah. Yahweh also sent a fire that burned up 250 men who supported those three men. That was a warning to all the Israelite people that they should respect and obey the leaders whom Yahweh had appointed. ¹¹But the descendants of Korah did not die on that day.

12-14 These are the descendants of Simeon:

the Nemuelites descended from his son Nemuel,
the Jaminites descended from his son Jamin,
the Jakinites descended from his son Jakin,
the Zerahites descended from his son Zerah,
the Shaulites descended from his son Shaul.

The Israelite leaders counted 22,200 men from the tribe of Simeon.

15-18 These are the descendants of Gad:

the Zephonites descended from his son Zephon,
the Haggites descended from his son Haggi,
the Shunites descended from his son Shuni,
the Oznites descended from his son Ozni,
the Erites descended from his son Eri,
the Arodites descended from his son Arod,
the Arelites descended from his son Areli.

The Israelite leaders counted 40,500 men from the tribe of Gad.

19-22 Judah's sons, Er and Onan, died in Canaan before they had any children. These are the descendants of Judah:

the Shelanites descended from his son Shelah,
the Perezites descended from his son Perez,
the Zerahites descended from his son Zerah.

Perez was the father of Hezron and Hamul.

The Hezronites descended from Hezron,
the Hamulites descended from Hamul.

The Israelite leaders counted 76,500 men from the tribe of Judah.

23-25 These are the descendants of Issachar:

the Tolaites descended from his son Tola,
the Puites descended from his son Puah,
the Jashubites descended from his son Jashub,
the Shimronites descended from his son Shimron,

The Israelite leaders counted 64,300 men from the tribe of Issachar.

26-27 These are the descendants of Zebulun:

- the Seredites descended from his son Sered,
- the Elonites descended from his son Elon,
- the Jahleelites descended from his son Jahleel,

The Israelite leaders counted 60,500 men from the tribe of Zebulun.

28-29 The sons of Joseph are Manasseh and Ephraim. These are the descendants of Manasseh:

- the Makirites descended from his son Machir.

Makir was the father of Gilead.

- The Gileadites descended from Gilead.

30-32 These are the descendants of Gilead:

- the Iezerites descended from his son Iezer,
- the Helekites descended from his son Helek,
- the Asrielites descended from his son Asriel,
- the Shechemites descended from his son Shechem,
- the Shemidaite descended from his son Shemida,
- the Hephherites descended from his son Hephher.

33-34 Hephher's son Zelophehad did not have any sons, but he had five daughters—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah.

The Israelite leaders counted 52,700 men from the tribe of Manasseh, who was one of the sons of Joseph.

35-37 These are the descendants of Ephraim:

- the Shuthelahites descended from his son Shuthelah,
- the Becherites descended from his son Becher,
- the Tahanites descended from his son Tahan,

These are the descendants of Shuthelah:

- the Eranites descended from his son Eran,

The Israelite leaders counted 32,500 men from the tribe of Ephraim, who was Joseph's other son.

38-41 These are the descendants of Benjamin:

- the Belaites descended from his son Bela,
- the Ashbelites descended from his son Ashbel,
- the Ahiramites descended from his son Ahiram,
- the Shuphamites descended from his son Shephupham,
- the Huphamites descended from his son Hupham,

Bela was the father of Ard and Naaman.

The Ardites descended from his son Ard,
the Naamites descended from his son Naamam.

The Israelite leaders counted 45,600 men from the tribe of Benjamin.

42-43 These are the descendants of Dan:

the Shuhamites descended from his son Shuhman,

The Israelite leaders counted 64,400 men from the tribe of Dan.

44-47 These are the descendants of Asher:

the Imnites descended from his son Imnah,

the Ishvites descended from his son Ishvi,

the Berites descended from his son Beriah,

Beriah had two sons, Heber and Malkiel.

The Heberites descended from his son Heber

the Malkielites descended from his son Malkiel.

Asher also had a daughter named Serah.

The Israelite leaders counted 53,400 men from the tribe of Asher.

48-50 These are the descendants of Naphtali:

the Jahzeelites descended from his son Jahzeel,

the Gunites descended from his son Guni,

the Jezerites descended from his son Jezer,

the Shillemites descended from his son Shillem,

The Israelite leaders counted 45,400 men from the tribe of Naphtali.

51 The total of the Israelite men whom the leaders counted was 601,730.

52 Then Yahweh said to Moses, **53** "Divide Canaan land among the tribes. Distribute the land according to the number of people in each tribe that are on your lists. **54-56** Decide by casting lots to determine which group will get which area, but give the largest areas to the groups with the most people."

57 The leaders also counted the male descendants of Levi. They were in clans descended from Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. **58** These also included people from the clans of Libni, Hebron, Mahli, Mushi, and Korah. All of them were descendants of Levi. Kohath was the ancestor of Amram, **59** whose wife was Jochebed. She also was a descendant of Levi, but she was born in Egypt. She and Amram had two sons, Aaron and Moses, and their older sister Miriam. **60** Aaron's sons were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. **61** But Nadab and Abihu died when they burned incense for a sacrifice to Yahweh in a way that disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded.

62 The leaders counted twenty-three thousand men from the descendants of Levi who were at least one month old. But these men were not counted when the rest of the Israelite people were counted, because were not given any land at that time.

⁶³Those were the men whom Eleazar and Moses said should be counted. They counted the Israelite people on the plains of Moab, on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ⁶⁴None of the men whom they counted were on the lists that were made by Aaron and Moses when the Israelites were in the wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵They were told what Yahweh had said. He said, "They will all die in this desert," and that is what happened. The only ones who were still alive were Jephunneh's son Caleb and Nun's son Joshua.

Chapter 27

¹One day the five daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses. They were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah. ²They came to the entrance of the sacred tent and stood in front of Eleazar, Moses, the tribal leaders, and many other Israelite people. ³They said, "Our father died during the time that we were in the desert, and he did not have any sons. But he was not among those who supported Korah, who rebelled against Yahweh, and he died because of his own sin. He did not have any sons. ⁴Why should the name of his clan disappear because our father had no sons? So give us some land like our father's relatives will be getting!"

⁵So Moses asked Yahweh what to do about their case. ⁶And Yahweh replied, ⁷"What the daughters of Zelophehad are requesting is right. You must give them some land, just as you are giving to their father's relatives. Give to each of them some of the land that would have been given to their brothers if they had any.

⁸Also tell this to the Israelite people: 'If a man who has no sons dies, give the things that his sons would have inherited to his daughters. ⁹If the man has no sons or daughters, give to his brothers the things that his sons and daughters would have inherited. ¹⁰If the man had no brothers, give to his father's brothers the things that his sons or daughters or brothers would have inherited. ¹¹If the man's father has no brothers, give to his closest relative the things that the others would have inherited.' That will be a rule for the Israelite people, because I am giving this as a command to you, Moses, to tell them."

¹²One day, Yahweh said to Moses, "Climb to the top of the Abarim mountains east of the Jordan River. Then look out over the land that I am giving to the Israelite people. ¹³After you have seen it, you will die just like your older brother Aaron did. ¹⁴The reason that you will die and not enter that land is that you both disobeyed my instructions in the wilderness of Zin. When the Israelite people rebelled against me there at Meribah, near Kadesh, I told you to speak to the rock to cause water to flow out of it. But because you struck the rock instead of speaking to it, you did not show the people my holy power."

¹⁵Then Moses said this to Yahweh, ¹⁶"Yahweh, you are the God who directs the spirits of all people. So please appoint a new leader for the Israelite people. ¹⁷Appoint someone who will lead your people when they go to fight a battle, so that they will not just wander around like sheep that do not have a shepherd."

¹⁸Yahweh replied, "Get Joshua son of Nun, who has my Spirit within him. Lay your hands on him to appoint him.

¹⁹Cause him to stand in front of Eleazar the priest, as all the people are watching, and commission him to be the new leader of the Israelite people. ²⁰Give to him some of the authority that you now have, in order that all the Israelite people will know that they must obey him. ²¹When you all need me to guide you, Joshua will stand in front of Eleazar. Then by casting lots Eleazar will determine what they should do. At Joshua's command all people of Israel will mobilize themselves together."

²²So Moses did what Yahweh commanded. He presented Joshua to Eleazar and to all the Israelite people. ²³Moses laid his hands on him and commissioned him to do the work that Yahweh told Moses to tell him to do.

Chapter 28

¹Yahweh said this to Moses, ²"Tell this to the Israelite people, 'Bring to me the offerings that will be burned on the altar. When they are burned, the smell will be very pleasing to me. And tell them that they must bring them at the

proper time. ³Tell them that what they must bring to me each day are two male lambs that are one year old. They must have no defects. They must be completely burned on the altar. ⁴They should bring one in the morning and the other early in the evening. ⁵They must also bring a flour offering of two liters of finely-ground flour, mixed with a liter of olive oil. ⁶That is the offering that they must bring every day. They started to bring those offerings while you were at Mount Sinai. When those offerings are burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. ⁷When they burn each lamb, they must also pour on the sacred altar in the holy place one liter of wine. ⁸In the evening, when they offer the second lamb, they must also bring the same offerings of flour and wine as they burned in the morning. When they are burned, the smell will also be very pleasing to me.

⁹On each Sabbath, you must bring two male lambs, each a year old, that have no defects. Also bring a flour offering of four and one-half liters of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil and a wine offering of four and one-half liters of wine. ¹⁰Those are the offerings that are to be burned on the altar each Sabbath. Those are in addition to the offerings of two lambs and wine that you must bring each day.

¹¹On the first day of each month you must bring to me an offering of two young bulls, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. All of these must be without defects. They must all be burned completely on the altar. ¹²Also bring with each bull an offering of six liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. With each male sheep make an offering of four liters of nice flour mixed with olive oil. ¹³Also bring an offering of two liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil with each lamb. When all of these are burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. ¹⁴With each bull also bring two liters of wine. With each male sheep, bring one and one-fifth liters of wine. With each lamb bring one liter of wine. These offerings must be brought on the first day of each month and burned completely on the altar. ¹⁵In addition to these offerings that you burn, you must bring to me one goat for an offering to remove the guilt of your sins.

¹⁶The Passover festival must be celebrated to honor me each year on the fourteenth day of your first month. ¹⁷The Festival of Unleavened Bread will start on the next day. For the following seven days, the bread that you eat must be made without yeast. ¹⁸On the first day of that festival, you must gather together to worship me, and you must not do any regular work that you would normally do. ¹⁹On that day, you must bring to me for an offering that will be completely burned on the altar two young bulls, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. They must all have no defects. ²⁰With each of these bulls, bring a grain offering of six liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. With the male sheep, bring a grain offering of four liters of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. ²¹With each of the seven lambs, bring an offering of two liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. ²²Also bring one goat for a sacrifice to make atonement for your sin. ²³Bring these offerings in addition to the offerings that you bring each morning. ²⁴The smell of the grain that is burned on the altar each day for seven days will be very pleasing to me. Bring the grain in addition to the animals and the wine that you burn on the altar. ²⁵On the seventh day of that festival, you must again gather together to worship me, and you must not do any regular work that you would normally do.

²⁶On the day of the Harvest festival, when you bring to me the first grain that you have harvested, you must gather together to worship me. Do not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. ²⁷Bring to me two young bulls, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. When they are completely burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. ²⁸Also bring a flour offering of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. For each bull bring five and three-quarters of a liter, and with each male sheep bring three and four-fifths liters. ²⁹For each of the lambs bring two liters. ³⁰Also sacrifice one male goat to make atonement for your sins. ³¹Bring these offerings and the offering of wine in addition to the animals and flour that you burn on the altar each day. And remember that the animals that you sacrifice must have no defects.”

Chapter 29

¹“Each year, gather together to worship me on the first day of your seventh month, and do not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. On that day the priests must blow their trumpets.

²When the offerings on the altar on that day are being completely burned, the smell will be very pleasing to me. The animals that you must bring are one young bull, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. They must have no defects. ³With these animals bring a grain offering of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. With the bull, bring five and three-quarters liters. With the male sheep, bring three and four-fifths liters, ⁴and with each of the seven lambs bring two liters. ⁵Also offer one male goat to atone for your sins. ⁶All of those animals will be in addition to the animals that are completely burned on the altar each morning and on the first day of each month. The offerings of flour and wine must be made exactly as I have decreed that you are to do. When these offerings are burned, the smell will be very pleasing to me.

⁷Each year, on the tenth day of your seventh month, you must gather together to worship me. Do not eat any food or do any work on that day. ⁸When you burn offerings on the altar on that day, the smell will be very pleasing to me. The animals that you must bring are one young bull, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. They must have no defects. ⁹With the bull, bring a flour offering of five and three-quarters liters of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. With the male sheep, bring three and four-fifths liters. ¹⁰With each of the lambs, bring two liters. ¹¹Also bring one male goat to remove the guilt of your sins, and the animals and flour and wine that you burn on the altar each day to atone for your sins. Those offerings will be in addition to the animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

¹²On the fifteenth day of your seventh month, you must all gather together to worship me. You must not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. You must continue to celebrate for seven days. ¹³When the offerings are burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. The animals that you must bring are thirteen young bulls, two male sheep, and fourteen male lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. ¹⁴With each of the thirteen bulls, bring a flour offering of five and three-quarters liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. With each of the male sheep, bring three and four-fifths liters. ¹⁵With each of the fourteen lambs, bring two liters. ¹⁶Also bring one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins, in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

¹⁷On the second day of the festival, you must bring to the altar twelve young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. ¹⁸Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ¹⁹Also offer one male goat; sacrifice it to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²⁰On the third day of the festival, you must bring to the altar eleven young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ²¹Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ²²Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²³On the fourth day of the festival, you must bring to the altar ten young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ²⁴Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ²⁵Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²⁶On the fifth day of the festival, you must bring to the altar nine young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ²⁷Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ²⁸Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²⁹On the sixth day of the festival, you must bring to the altar eight young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ³⁰Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ³¹Also offer one male

goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

³²On the seventh day of the festival, you must bring to the altar seven young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ³³Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ³⁴Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

³⁵Eight days after the start of that festival, you must again gather together to worship me; you must not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. ³⁶On that day, you must bring to the altar one bull, one full-grown ram, and seven lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ³⁷Bring also with the bull and the male sheep and each of the lambs the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ³⁸Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

³⁹At your festivals, these are the offerings that you must bring to me: The offerings that will be completely burned on the altar, the grain offerings, the wine offerings, and the offerings to restore fellowship with me. Those are in addition to the offerings that you give to me because you promised to do something, and other special offerings that you want to give to me."

⁴⁰Then Moses told to the Israelite people all the things that Yahweh had commanded him.

Chapter 30

¹Moses spoke with the leaders of the Israelite tribes. He told them these commands that Yahweh had given to him:

²"If a man solemnly promises Yahweh that he will do something, he must do what he promised.

³If a young woman who is still living with her parents solemnly promises to Yahweh to do something, ⁴and if her father hears about what she promised, and if he does not say anything to her, she must do what she promised.

⁵But if her father hears about what she promised and does not allow her to do that, then she does not need to do what she promised. Yahweh will forgive her for not doing what she promised.

⁶If a woman promises Yahweh that she will do something, but then she gets married, ⁷If she marries a husband while under the vows, or she makes rash utterances by which she obligates herself, they will stand. ⁸But if her husband stops her on the day that he hears about it, then he cancels the vow that she has made, the rash talk of her lips with which she has bound herself. Yahweh will release her.

⁹If a widow or a woman who has been divorced makes a promise, she must do what she promised.

¹⁰If a woman who is married promises to do something, ¹¹and if her husband hears about it but does not object, she must do what she promised. ¹²But if he hears about it and does not allow her to do that, she does not need to do what she promised, and Yahweh will forgive her for not doing it. ¹³A woman's husband may require her to do what she has promised, or he may not allow her to do what she has promised. ¹⁴If he does not object for several days after he hears about it, she must do what she promised. ¹⁵But if he waits a long time after she has promised to do something and then he tells her that he will not permit her to do it, if she does not do what she promised, she will not be punished. Her husband is the one whom Yahweh will punish."

¹⁶Those are the rules that Yahweh gave to Moses for husbands and wives, and for young women who are still living with their parents.

Chapter 31

¹Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ²"Tell the Israelite people that they should pay back the Midian people group for what they did to you. After that happens, you will die."

³So Moses said to the people, "Get some men prepared for battle. Yahweh will enable them to pay back the Midian people group for what they did to us. ⁴Select a thousand men from each tribe to fight." ⁵So twelve thousand men prepared for fighting in the battle, one thousand from each tribe. ⁶When Moses sent them to the battle, Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, went with them. He took with him some of the things from the sacred tent and the trumpets that would be blown to give the signal to start the battle.

⁷The Israelite men fought the soldiers from the Midian people group, as Yahweh had told Moses to tell them to do, and they killed every man from the Midian people group. ⁸Among those whom they killed were the five kings of the Midian people group—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. They also killed Balaam with a sword son of Beor. ⁹They captured all the women and children of the Midian people group and took away their cattle, their flocks of sheep, and herds of goats, and all their other possessions. ¹⁰Then they burned down all the houses in the towns and villages where the people of the Midian people group lived. ¹¹But they took home with them all the women and children and animals and possessions. ¹²They brought all these to Eleazar and Moses, and to the rest of the Israelite people who were at their camp on the plains of Moab, near the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ¹³Eleazar and all the leaders of the people and Moses went outside the camp to greet them.

¹⁴But Moses was angry with some of the men who had returned from the battle. He was angry with the army officers, those men who were commanders over thousands of men and those who were commanders over hundreds of men. ¹⁵He asked them, "Why did you allow the women to live? ¹⁶They are the ones who did what Balaam suggested and urged our people to worship Baal instead of Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh caused a plague to strike his people while they were at Peor. ¹⁷So, now you must kill all the boys of the Midian people group, and also kill all the women who have slept with any man. ¹⁸Spare only the girls who are virgins. You can keep them to be your wives or your slaves.

¹⁹All of you who have killed someone or touched the corpse of someone who was killed in the battle must stay outside the camp for seven days. On the third day and on the seventh day, you must perform the ritual to enable you to become acceptable to God again. You and your prisoners. ²⁰You must also wash your clothes and anything that you took to the battle that is made of leather or goat's hair or wood."

²¹Then Eleazar said to the soldiers who had returned from the battle, "This is what Yahweh has instructed Moses.

²²You must put into a fire any gold or silver or bronze or iron or tin or lead things that you brought back from the battle. ²³Put everything that will not burn into the fire, and then they will be acceptable for you to use. But also sprinkle those things with the water that causes things and people to become acceptable to God. The things that would burn if you put them in a fire, sprinkle them with that water. ²⁴On the seventh day, wash your clothes, and then you will become acceptable to God again. After you do that, you may return to the camp."

²⁵Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁶"Tell Eleazar and the leaders of the family groups that they must write down a list of all the goods, the women, and the animals that were captured in the battle. ²⁷Then tell Eleazar and the leaders of the family groups that they must divide all those things between the men who fought in the battle and the rest of the people. ²⁸From the men who fought in the battle, take one from every five hundred people and from every five hundred cattle and donkeys and sheep, to be a tax for me. ²⁹Take these things to Eleazar to be my share as the offering presented to me. ³⁰And from the other things, take one item from every fifty. That includes people, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, and other animals. Give those things to the descendants of Levi who take care of my sacred tent." ³¹So Eleazar and Moses did what Yahweh commanded.

³²⁻³⁵There were 675,000 sheep, seventy-two thousand cattle, sixty-one thousand donkeys, and thirty-virgins that they had captured from the Midian people group.

³⁶The men who fought in the battle took 337,000 sheep from the battle, ³⁷and they gave 675 of them to Yahweh.

³⁸They took thirty-six thousand cattle and gave 72 of them to Yahweh. ³⁹They took 30,500 donkeys, and they gave 61 of them to Yahweh. ⁴⁰They took sixteen thousand virgins, and they gave 32 of them to Yahweh.

⁴¹Moses gave to Eleazar all the animals that had been presented to Yahweh, as Yahweh had commanded.

⁴²⁻⁴⁶Moses separated what those who had fought in the battle received from what the other people received. The people received 337,500 sheep, thirty-six thousand cattle, 30,500 donkeys, and sixteen thousand virgins. ⁴⁷From what the people received, Moses took one from every fifty items and gave them to Yahweh. That included animals and people. As Yahweh commanded, Moses gave them all to the descendants of Levi who took care of the sacred tent.

⁴⁸Then the army officers, those who were commanders over thousands of men and those who were commanders over hundreds of men, they came to Moses. ⁴⁹They said, "We, who are your servants, have counted the soldiers whom we command, and we found that none of them is missing. ⁵⁰So to thank Yahweh for that, we have brought to him a gift of the gold items that we found after the battle, gold arm bands and bracelets and rings, earrings and necklaces. We hope that this will atone for our sins."

⁵¹So Eleazar and Moses accepted the gold items that they brought. ⁵²The total of the offering they presented weighed about one hundred and ninety one kilograms. ⁵³Each soldier had taken these things for himself. ⁵⁴Eleazar and Moses accepted these gold items from these commanders and put them in the sacred tent to remind the Israelite people about how Yahweh had helped them defeat the Midian people group.

Chapter 32

¹The people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad had a lot of livestock. They saw that the land near the city of Jazer and the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River had good grass for the animals to graze on. ²So their leaders came to Eleazar and the leaders of the people and Moses. They said, ³"This is a list of places we have surveyed: Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon. ⁴Yahweh has enabled us Israelites to capture some land that is very good for animals to graze on—the land near the towns of Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon. ⁵If it pleases you, we would like this land to be ours, instead of land on the other side of the Jordan River."

⁶Moses replied to the leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben, "It is not right for your fellow Israelites to go to fight in wars and you stay here! ⁷If you do that, you will cause the other Israelites to be discouraged, with the result that they will not cross the Jordan River to the land that Yahweh is giving to them. ⁸Our ancestors did the same kind of thing. I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see what the land of Canaan was like. ⁹They went as far as Eshcol Valley, but when they saw the huge people in the land, they returned and caused the Israelite people to be discouraged saying, 'We should not try to enter the land that Yahweh said that he is giving to us.' ¹⁰So Yahweh became very angry with them, and he solemnly declared this, ¹¹⁻¹²From all the people who came out of Egypt, the only ones who are at least twenty years old who will see the land that I promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are Jephunneh's son Caleb and Nun's son Joshua, because they trusted me completely. None of the other people who came out of Egypt will even see that land, because they have not completely believed in my power.' ¹³So Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people, and as a result he has caused us to wander in this desert for forty years. Finally, all the people who had sinned against Yahweh by refusing to trust him died, one by one. ¹⁴And you are acting like your ancestors did! You sinful Israelite people are going to cause Yahweh to be more angry with you than he was with our ancestors! ¹⁵If you stop trusting him, he will cause you and all your fellow Israelites to stay longer in the desert, and he will get rid of all of you!"

¹⁶Then the leaders of the tribes of Reuben and Gad said to Moses, "First we will build pens for our animals and build cities for our families here. ¹⁷Then our families will live in strong cities with walls around them, and they will be safe from the people who live in this land. Then we will get ready to fight battles. We will help the other

Israelites to get land on the other side of the river. ¹⁸We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received some land. ¹⁹We will not take any land on the west side of the Jordan River, because our land will be here on the east side."

²⁰So Moses told them, "I will tell you what you must do. You must get ready to fight battles for Yahweh. ²¹You must cross the Jordan River carrying your weapons. ²²After Yahweh helps us to take that land from the people who live there, you will be permitted to return to your homes. You will have done what you have promised Yahweh and the Israelite people that you would do, and you may keep this land to be your own, given to you by Yahweh.

²³But if you do not do these things, you will be sinning against Yahweh, and he will punish you for that sin. ²⁴Now you can build cities for your families and pens for your animals, but after doing that, you must do what you have promised."

²⁵The leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben replied, "We will do what you have asked us to do, because you are our leader. ²⁶Our wives and children and our cattle and sheep and goats will stay here in the cities of the Gilead area, ²⁷but we will prepare to go to battle. We will take our weapons and go across the Jordan River and fight for Yahweh, just as you, our leader, have said."

²⁸So Moses gave instructions about them to Eleazar, Joshua, and the leaders of the Israelite tribes. ²⁹Moses said to them, "If the men from the tribes of Gad and Reuben prepare for battle and cross the Jordan River with you, in order to do what Yahweh desires and help you to take that land, give them the Gilead area to belong to them.

³⁰But if they do not take their weapons and go with you prepared to fight, they will not receive this land. They will need to accept some land in Canaan, like the rest of you will do."

³¹The leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben replied, "We will do what you have said and what Yahweh has said.

³²We will cross the river into Canaan land, and we will do what Yahweh desires and be prepared for battle. But our land will be here on the east side of the Jordan River."

³³So Moses agreed to give that land to the tribes of Gad and Reuben and to half of the tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh. That land was previously the land where Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, ruled, and the land where Og, the king of Bashan region, ruled, including its cities and surrounding land.

³⁴The people of the tribe of Gad rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶Beth Nimrah, and Beth Haran cities. Those were cities with strong walls around them. And they also built pens for their sheep.

³⁷The people of the tribe of Reuben rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, ³⁸Nebo, Baal Meon, and Sibmah cities. When they rebuilt Nebo and Baal Meon, they gave new names to those cities.

³⁹The descendants of Manasseh's son Makir went to the region of Gilead and took it away from the Amor people group. ⁴⁰So Moses gave Gilead to the family of Makir, and they started to live there. ⁴¹Jair, who was also a descendant of Manasseh, went and captured the small towns in that region, and he named them the Towns of Jair.

⁴²A man named Nobah went and captured the city of Kenath and the nearby towns, and then he used his own name to be the new name of that area.

Chapter 33

¹Here is a list of the places where the Israelites went as Aaron and Moses led them after they left Egypt. ²Yahweh commanded Moses to write down the names of the places where they went.

³On the fifteenth day of the first month of the year, the day after they celebrated the Passover, they left the city of Rameses in Egypt and marched boldly while the Egyptian army was coming behind them. ⁴As they left, the people of Egypt were still burying the bodies of their firstborn sons. By killing them, Yahweh showed that the gods that the people of Egypt worshiped were false gods.

- ⁵After leaving Rameses, they first went to Succoth and set up their tents there.
- ⁶Then they left Succoth and went to Etham, at the edge of the desert, and set up their tents there.
- ⁷Then they left Etham and returned to Pi Hahiroth, to the east of Baal Zephon, and set up their tents near Migdol.
- ⁸Then they left Pi Hahiroth and walked through the Sea of Reeds and continued three days into the Etham Desert, and set their tents at Marah.
- ⁹Then they left Marah and went to Elim. There were twelve springs and seventy palm trees there. They set up their tents there.
- ¹⁰Then they left Elim and went to the area near the Sea of Reeds and set up their tents there.
- ¹¹Then they left the Sea of Reeds and went near the wilderness of Sinai and set up their tents there.
- ¹²Then they left the wilderness of Sinai and went to Dophkah and set up their tents there.
- ¹³Then they left Dophkah and went to Alush and set up their tents there.
- ¹⁴Then they left Alush and went and set up their tents at Rephidim, where they had no water to drink.
- ¹⁵Then they left Rephidim and went to the wilderness of the Sinai and set up their tents there.
- ¹⁶Then they left the wilderness of the Sinai and went to Kibroth Hattaavah and set up their tents there.
- ¹⁷Then they left Kibroth Hattaavah and went to Hazeroth and set up their tents there.
- ¹⁸Then they left Hazeroth and went to Rithmah and set up their tents there.
- ¹⁹Then they left Rithmah and went to Rimmon Perez and set up their tents there.
- ²⁰Then they left Rimmon Perez and went to Libnah and set up their tents there.
- ²¹Then they left Libnah and went to Rissah and set up their tents there.
- ²²Then they left Rissah and set up their tents at Kehelathah.
- ²³Then they left Kehelathah; they went to Mount Shepher and set up their tents there.
- ²⁴Then they left Mount Shepher and went to Haradah and set up their tents there.
- ²⁵Then they left Haradah and went to Makheloth and set up their tents there.
- ²⁶Then they left Makheloth and went to Tahath and set up their tents there.
- ²⁷Then they left Tahath and went to Terah and set up their tents there.
- ²⁸Then they left Terah and went to Mithcah and set up their tents there.
- ²⁹Then they left Mithcah and went to Hashmonah and set up their tents there.
- ³⁰Then they left Hashmonah and went to Moseroth and set up their tents there.
- ³¹Then they left Moseroth and went to Bene Jaakan and set up their tents there.
- ³²Then they left Bene Jaakan and went to Hor Haggidgad and set up their tents there.

³³Then they left Hor Haggidgad and went to Jotbathah and set up their tents there.

³⁴Then they left Jotbathah and went to Abronah and set up their tents there.

³⁵Then they left Abronah and went to Ezion Geber and set up their tents there.

³⁶Then they left Ezion Geber and went to the wilderness of Zin and set up their tents at Kadesh there.

³⁷Then they left Kadesh and went to Mount Hor, at the border of Edom, and set up their tents there. ³⁸Aaron the priest obeyed Yahweh and climbed up the mountain. There he died, on the first day of their fifth month, forty years after the Israelites left Egypt. ³⁹Aaron was 123 years old when he died.

⁴⁰That was when the king of the city of Arad heard that the Israelites were coming. Arad was in the southern wilderness in the land of Canaan, where the Canaan people group lived.

⁴¹The Israelites left Mount Hor and went to Zalmonah and set up their tents there.

⁴²Then they left Zalmonah and went to Punon and set up tents there.

⁴³Then they left Punon and went to Oboth and set up their tents there.

⁴⁴Then they left Oboth and went to Iye Abarim, which was on the border of the region of Moab, and set up their tents there.

⁴⁵Then they left Iye Abarim and went to Dibon Gad and set up their tents there.

⁴⁶Then they left Dibon Gad and set up their tents at Almon Diblathaim.

⁴⁷Then they left Almon Diblathaim and went to the Abarim Mountains, near Nebo and set up their tents there.

⁴⁸Then they left the Abarim mountains and went to the plains of Moab, near the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

⁴⁹They set up their tents there on the plains of Moab. Their tents stretched for several kilometers from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim.

⁵⁰While we were there on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River, across from Jericho, Yahweh spoke to Moses. He said, ⁵¹“Tell this to the Israelite people, ‘When you cross the Jordan River and enter the region of Canaan, ⁵²you must force all the people who live there to leave. Destroy all their carved figures and all cast figures made of metal. Wreck all the places where they worship their idols. ⁵³Take their land from them and start to live there, because I have given their land to you for you to own.

⁵⁴Divide up the land by casting lots to decide which group will get which area. Give the larger areas to the groups that have more people, and give the smaller areas to the groups that have fewer people. Each tribe will receive its own land. ⁵⁵If you do not force the people who live there to leave, they will cause you to have much trouble. They will be like sharp hooks in your eyes, and like thorns in your sides. And they will bring trouble to you, in that land where you will be living. ⁵⁶And then I will punish you, as I had planned to punish them.”

Chapter 34

¹Yahweh said to Moses, ²“Tell this to the Israelite people, ‘You will soon enter Canaan land, and it will become yours. The following will be the borders of the land. ³On the south you will receive part of the wilderness of Zin, near the border of the region of Edom. On the east side, the border will start at the south end of the Dead Sea.

⁴It will extend to a little south of the Scorpion Pass, and extend west through the wilderness of Sin and south of Kadesh Barnea. From there it will extend to Hazar Addar and from there to Azmon. ⁵From Azmon it will extend west to the dry riverbed at the border of Egypt and then to the Mediterranean Sea.

⁶The border on the west will be the Mediterranean Sea.

⁷The border on the north will start from the Mediterranean Sea and extend west to Mount Hor. ⁸From there it will extend to Lebo Hamath and then to Zedad. ⁹From there the border will extend to Ziphron, and it will end at Hazar Enan.

¹⁰The border on the east will start at Hazar Enan and extend south to Shepham. ¹¹From there it will extend east of Ain to Riblah and then along the hills that are east of Galilee Lake. ¹²Then the border will extend south along the Jordan River and end at the Dead Sea.

Those will be the borders around your country.”

¹³So Moses told all that to the Israelite people. Then he said to them, “That is the land that you will receive. You must cast lots to decide which area will go to each of the nine and a half tribes, because Yahweh has commanded that it should be divided among them. ¹⁴The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh have already received the land in which they will live. ¹⁵They have received land on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.”

¹⁶Then Yahweh said to Moses,

¹⁷“These are the men who will divide the land. First, Eleazar and Joshua, ¹⁸but other leaders from each of the twelve tribes will help them divide the land.

¹⁹From the tribe of Judah, appoint Jephunneh’s son Caleb.

²⁰From the tribe of Simeon appoint Ammihud’s son Shemuel.

²¹From the tribe of Benjamin appoint Kishon’s son Elidad.

²²From the tribe of Dan appoint Jogli’s son Bukki.

²³From the tribe of Manasseh appoint Ephod’s son Hanniel.

²⁴From the tribe of Ephraim appoint Shiphtan’s son Kemuel.

²⁵From the tribe of Zebulun appoint Parnak’s son Elizaphan.

²⁶From the tribe of Issachar appoint Azzan’s son Paltiel.

²⁷From the tribe of Asher appoint Shelomi’s son Ahihud.

²⁸From the tribe of Naphtali appoint Ammihud’s son Pedahel.”

²⁹Yahweh commanded that all those were the men who should divide the region of Canaan among the Israelite people.

Chapter 35

¹Yahweh told this to Moses while the Israelites were on the plain in Moab near the Jordan River, across from Jericho, ²“Tell the Israelite people that from the land that they will receive, they must give to the descendants of Levi some cities in which they can live. They must also give them some land around these cities. ³These cities will

be for the descendants of Levi to live in, and around the cities will be land for their cattle and flocks of sheep and goats and other animals.

⁴The land that you give them for their animals must extend out for 457 meters from the walls of the cities. ⁵Also measure 920 meters in each direction out from the walls of each city. That additional land will be land for their animals outside the walls of the cities.

⁶Six of the cities that you give to the descendants of Levi will be cities to which people can run to be safe. If someone accidentally kills someone else, the one who killed that person may run to one of those cities to be safe.

⁷You must also give to the descendants of Levi forty-two other cities and the land around those cities for their animals. ⁸The Israelite tribes who have the most people must give them more cities than the tribes who have fewer people give. Each tribe must give some of its cities to the descendants of Levi, but the tribes that have more land must give more cities, and the tribes that have fewer cities will give fewer cities."

⁹Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁰"Tell this to the Israelite people, 'When you cross the Jordan River and enter the region of Canaan, ¹¹you must choose some cities to which people can run to be safe. If someone kills another person, the one who killed that person may run to one of those cities and be safe. ¹²One of the relatives of the person who was killed may think he must avenge his relative's death by killing the murderer. But in that city, the killer will be safe because the people in that city would kill those relatives if they tried to get revenge there. The man who killed someone accidentally must be put on trial in a court. ¹³You must set apart six cities to be cities to which someone who killed another person accidentally may run and be safe. ¹⁴There must be three of these cities on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side, in the region of Canaan. ¹⁵Those six cities will be cities where Israelite people may run and be safe, and where foreigners and other people who are living among you can also run and be safe. Any of those people who accidentally kills someone may run to one of these cities and be safe there.

¹⁶⁻¹⁸But you must consider that anyone who kills another person with an iron weapon or with a big rock or with a piece of wood, is a murderer, and the one who killed the other person must be executed. ¹⁹A relative of the person who was murdered must be the one who executes the murderer as soon as he finds him. ²⁰If someone shoves another person over a cliff or throws something at another person ²¹or hits that person with his hand and causes that person to die, if he did it because he hated that person, then you must consider that he is a murderer, and must be executed. A relative of the person who was killed must be the one who executes the murderer as soon as he finds him.

²²But someone might accidentally shove someone else, or he might accidentally throw something at another person and hit him, but not because he hates that person. ²³Or he might drop a rock on someone that he could not see. There is a law for the one who does that did not plan to hurt anyone and did not hate the person who was killed. ²⁴That law is that the people of that city must decide whether the relative of the dead person has the right to get revenge, or whether the one who killed the other person truly did it accidentally. ²⁵If they decide that the killer planned to kill the other person, they must not allow him to stay in their city. But if they decide that it was done accidentally, they must protect the killer from being killed by the dead person's relative. They must send the killer to one of the cities where he will be safe, and allow him to stay there until the high priest dies. After that, the killer may go back to his home, because the dead person's relative no longer has the right to get revenge.

²⁶But while the high priest is still living, the person who is in that safe city must not leave that city. ²⁷If he goes outside the city, and if a relative of the dead person finds him, that relative is permitted to kill that person, and people will not consider that the relative is guilty of murder. ²⁸The killer must stay in that city where he will be safe until the high priest dies. He will be safe from revenge after that, because the death of the high priest will be considered to be a sacrifice to atone for that murder. After that, the killer may return to his home.

²⁹You must always obey these legal proceedings, wherever you live.

³⁰If someone is accused of killing another person, the one who is accused may be executed only if there are people who saw him do it. There must be more than one witness. No one is permitted to be executed if there was only one witness.

³¹If there is a murderer who truly should be executed, do not spare his life by accepting a ransom. He must be executed.

³²If someone has run to a city where he will be safe, do not allow him to give you money in order that you will permit him to return to his home before the high priest dies.

³³You must execute people who truly murder others. If you did not do that, you would be causing the people who live in the land to become unacceptable to me. Anyone who deliberately kills an innocent person must be executed.

³⁴I am Yahweh, and I live among you Israelites, so do not spoil the land by allowing people to murder others without being punished.”

Chapter 36

¹The family leaders of the clan of Gilead of the tribe of Manasseh went to Moses and the other family leaders of the Israelite people. ²They said to Moses, “Yahweh commanded you, our leader, to apportion the land to the Israelite tribes by casting lots to decide which group would get which area. Yahweh also commanded you to give the land that belonged to our fellow Israelite Zelophehad to his daughters. ³But if his daughters marry men from the other Israelite tribes, that land will no longer belong to our tribe. People of other tribes will get it. So some of our land will no longer belong to us. ⁴When the year of the celebration of Jubilee comes, when all the land that has been bought by someone is returned to its original owners, the land that belonged to Zelophehad will belong to the tribes of the men that his daughters marry. So some of our land, the land that we received from our fathers, will be taken from us, and we will never own it again.”

⁵Yahweh told Moses what to reply to them, so Moses said this to them, “These men from the tribe of Manasseh are right. ⁶This is what Yahweh is saying to the daughters of Zelophehad, ‘Each of you may marry anyone you want to, but you must marry only someone from your own tribe.’ ⁷In that way, the land that belongs to Israelites will not be passed from one tribe to another tribe. Each Israelite will keep the land in the tribe that belonged to his ancestors.

⁸A woman who inherits her father’s land may get married, but she must marry someone from her own tribe. In that way, every Israelite will keep the land that belonged to his ancestors. ⁹The land must not be passed from one tribe to another tribe. Each Israelite tribe must keep the land that it received from its ancestors.”

¹⁰Zelophehad’s daughters obeyed what Yahweh told Moses. ¹¹The five daughters—Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milkah and Noah—married their cousins, their father’s relatives. ¹²The men whom they married were from the tribe of Manasseh, so their land continued to belong to their father’s family and tribe.

¹³Those were the commands and decrees that Yahweh gave to Moses to tell to the Israelites, while they were on the plains of Moab, close to the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

Deuteronomy

Chapter 1

¹In this book is written what Moses had said to all the Israelites, after they had set up their tents east of the Jordan—in the desert plain along the Jordan—near a place named Suph, between Paran on one side of the Jordan River and the towns of Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab on the other side of the river. ²To walk from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, people usually travel for only eleven days, going by way of the hill country called Edom.

³Forty years after the Israelites had left Egypt, Moses told the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him. ⁴This was after they had defeated Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who lived in the city of Heshbon, and Og, the king of the region of Bashan, who lived in towns of Ashtaroth and Edrei.

⁵Moses told them these things while the people were in Moab, on the east side of the Jordan River. He explained to them God's instructions. This is what he said to them:

⁶"Yahweh our God said to us when we were at Mount Sinai, 'You have stayed for a very long time at the foot of this mountain. ⁷So now continue traveling. Go to the hill country where the Amorites live and to the nearby areas—to the plain along the Jordan, to the hill country, to the western foothills, to the southern Judean wilderness, to the Mediterranean seacoast, to all the land of Canaan, to the Lebanon mountains, and northeast to the great Euphrates River. ⁸I will give that land to you. I, Yahweh, promised to your ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that I would give it to them and to their descendants. So now go and occupy it.'"

⁹Moses also said to the people, "When we were still at Mount Sinai, I said to your ancestors, 'It is a very big task for me to govern all of you. I cannot do it by myself. ¹⁰Yahweh our God has caused us Israelites to become as numerous as the stars in the sky. ¹¹And I hope that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, will cause us to become a thousand times as numerous as we are now and that he will bless us just like he promised to do. ¹²But I certainly cannot deal with all of your complaints and disputes. ¹³So choose some men from your tribes who are wise and who have good sense and who are respected. Then I will appoint them to be your leaders.'

¹⁴Your ancestors replied, 'What you have suggested is good for us to do.'

¹⁵So I took the wise and respected men that your ancestors chose from your tribes, and I appointed them to be your leaders. I appointed some to rule over one thousand people, some to have authority over one hundred people, some to have authority over fifty people, and some to have authority over ten people. I also appointed other officers from throughout your tribes. ¹⁶I instructed your leaders, 'Listen to the disputes that occur among your people. Judge each dispute, including disputes between close relatives and quarrels between your people and people from other countries who live among you. ¹⁷You must not play favorites. You must treat poor people and important people equally. You must not worry about what anyone will think, because you will decide matters as God wants you to. If any dispute is very difficult and you are unable to decide it, bring it to me, and I will decide.'

¹⁸At that time I also told to you many other things."

¹⁹"Then, just like Yahweh our God commanded us, we left Mount Sinai and went through that huge desert that is very dangerous, on the road to the hill country where the Amor people group live. We arrived at Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰I said to your ancestors, 'We have now come to the hill country where the Amor people group live. This is part of the area that Yahweh our God, the one whom our ancestors worshiped, is giving to us. ²¹Note that Yahweh our God is giving this land to us. So go and occupy it as he commanded. Do not be at all afraid.'

²²But your ancestors all came to me and said, 'Before we go, we should first send some men there to explore the land, in order that they can return and tell us which will be the best road to go there and what kind of towns are there.'

²³I thought that it would be good to do that, so I chose twelve men, one man from each tribe. ²⁴They went up into the hill country as far as Eshcol Valley, and they explored all that area. ²⁵They picked some of the fruit that they found there and brought it to us. They reported that the land that Yahweh our God was giving to us is very good."

²⁶"But your ancestors refused to go and conquer that land. They rebelled against what Yahweh our God had commanded them to do, and they would not go into that land. ²⁷Your ancestors stayed in their tents and complained. They said, 'Yahweh hates us. So he has brought us here from Egypt just to allow the Amor people group to destroy us. ²⁸We do not want to go there. The men whom we sent there have made us very discouraged. They have told us that the people there are much stronger and taller than we are, and that there are very high walls around their towns. Also they reported that they had seen giants there that are descendants of Anak.'

²⁹Then I said to your ancestors, 'Do not be afraid at all of those people! ³⁰Yahweh our God will go ahead of you, and he will fight for you, just like you saw him do for you in Egypt ³¹and in the desert. You saw how he brought you safely here, like a man would carry his son. '

³²⁻³³I reminded them that he always went ahead of them while they traveled in the desert. He directed them by a pillar of fire during the night and a pillar of cloud during the day. He showed them places to set up their tents. But in spite of what I said, your ancestors would not trust Yahweh our God.

³⁴Yahweh heard what they said, and he became angry. He solemnly declared, ³⁵⁻³⁶Caleb son of Jephunneh, will enter the land. He has obeyed me completely. So I will give to him and to his descendants some of the land that he explored. He is the only one of all you people who will enter that land. None of these evil people will ever see that good land which I solemnly promised to give to your ancestors.'

³⁷But because of what your ancestors did, Yahweh was also angry with me. He said to me, 'You also will not go enter that land. ³⁸Joshua son of Nun, who is your helper, will enter it. Encourage him, because he is the one who will enable you Israelite people to occupy that land.'

³⁹Then Yahweh said to all of us, 'You said that your children would be captured by your enemies. Because they are very young, they do not yet know what is good and what is evil. But they are the ones to whom I will give that land, and they will enter it and occupy it. ⁴⁰But as for you, turn around and go back into the desert, toward the Sea of Reeds.'

⁴¹Then your ancestors replied, 'We have sinned; we have disobeyed Yahweh. So we will go and attack the people who live in that land, just as Yahweh our God has commanded us to do.' And each of their men put on his weapons, and they thought that it would be easy to invade the hill country.

⁴²But Yahweh said to me, 'Tell them, "Do not go there and attack those people, because I will not go with you, and if you go, you can be sure that your enemy will defeat you."

⁴³So I said that to your ancestors, but they did not want to listen to what I said. They again rebelled against what Yahweh commanded them to do. Their soldiers proudly marched up into that hill country. ⁴⁴Then the men of the Amor people group who lived in that region came out of their towns and attacked those soldiers. They chased your ancestors' soldiers like a swarm of bees would chase a person, and they pursued their men south from Edom and defeated them at the city of Hormah. ⁴⁵So your ancestors went back to Kadesh Barnea and cried out to request Yahweh to help them, but he did not listen to them. He did not pay any attention to them. ⁴⁶So we stayed there at Kadesh Barnea for a long time."

Chapter 2

¹"Then we turned around and went through the desert toward the Sea of Reeds as Yahweh told us to do, and we wandered in Edom for many years.

²Then Yahweh said to me, ³"You have been wandering around this hill country for a long enough time. Now turn and travel toward the north. ⁴And tell the people that they are about to travel near the land that belongs to the descendants of Esau, who are also descendants of Isaac. They live in the hill country of Edom. They will be afraid of you, ⁵but do not start to fight against them, because I am not going to give you even a tiny bit of their land. I have given that land to the descendants of Esau. ⁶When you travel near their land, buy food and water from them.'

⁷Do not forget that Yahweh our God has blessed you in everything that you have done. He knows what has happened to you while you have wandered in this huge desert. But he has been with you during those forty years, and as a result you have had everything that you needed.

⁸So we continued to travel. We avoided going through the hill country where the descendants of Esau live. We turned from the road that goes along the plain of the Jordan valley, and comes up from Ezion Geber and Elath, and we traveled along the desert road of Moab.

⁹Yahweh said to me, 'Do not bother the people of Moab, and do not start to fight against them, because I am not going to give you any of their land. Do not forget that they are descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, and I have given to them the city of Ar.'

¹⁰A large group of giants called Emim formerly lived there. They were as tall as the giants who were descendants of Anak. ¹¹They and the descendants of Anak are also called the Repha giants, but the people of Moab call them Emim. ¹²The Hor people group also formerly lived in the Edom area, but the descendants of Esau chased them out. They defeated and killed them and settled in their land, just as the Israelite people later expelled their enemies from the land that Yahweh gave to them.)

¹³Moses also said to the Israelite people, "Then we crossed the Zered Gorge, as Yahweh told us to do. ¹⁴It had been thirty-eight years from the time we first left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Gorge. During those years, all the Israelite fighting men of that generation died, as Yahweh had solemnly said would happen. ¹⁵They died because Yahweh opposed them until he had gotten rid of all of them.

¹⁶After all the men who had been old enough to fight in wars had died, ¹⁷Yahweh said to me, ¹⁸"Today you all must travel through the region of Moab, near Ar, their city. ¹⁹When you come near the border of the land where the Ammon people group live, do not bother them or start to fight against them. They are also descendants of Lot, so I am not going to give you any of the land that I have given to them.'

²⁰(That region is also called the land of the Repha giants, who formerly lived there. The Ammon people group call them the Zamzum group. ²¹They were a large and powerful group, who were as tall as the descendants of Anak. But Yahweh destroyed them, and the Ammon people group drove them away and took their land from them and started to live there. ²²Yahweh had done the same thing for the descendants of Esau who live in the hill country of Edom. He got rid of the Hor people group, with the result that the Edom people group took their land from them and started to live there. They still live there. ²³People who came from the island of Crete got rid of the Av group who previously lived in the land close to the Mediterranean Sea, as far south as Gaza. They took their land from them and started to live there.)

²⁴"After we had gone through the region of Moab, Yahweh said to us, 'Now cross the Arnon River. I will help you to defeat the army of Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who lives in the city of Heshbon. So attack their army and start to take their land from them. ²⁵Today I will begin to cause everyone, everywhere, to be afraid of you. Everyone who hears about you will tremble and be terrified.'

²⁶Then I sent messengers to go from the desert, where we were, to King Sihon at Heshbon. I told them to give this peaceful message to the king: ²⁷'Please allow us to travel through your land. We promise that we will stay on the road; we will not turn off to the right or to the left. ²⁸We will pay for any food or water that you allow us to buy. We want only to walk through your country ²⁹until we cross the Jordan River into the land that Yahweh our God is giving to us. Do for us just as the descendants of Esau who live in the Edom area and the Moab people group did for us when they allowed us to go through their areas.' ³⁰But King Sihon would not allow us to go through his country. That was because Yahweh our God caused him to be stubborn. The result was that Yahweh enabled us to defeat his army and take his land, which we still live in.

³¹Yahweh said to me, 'Listen! I am about to allow you to defeat Sihon's army and to take the people's land from them. So start to occupy it!'

³²Then Sihon came out of the city with all his army to fight against us at the town of Jahaz. ³³But God enabled us to defeat them, and we killed Sihon, his sons, and all his soldiers. ³⁴We captured their cities and destroyed them all. We killed all the men and women and children; we did not allow any of them to remain alive. ³⁵We took the valuable things that were in the cities that we captured, and also their cattle. ³⁶Yahweh our God enabled us to capture all their towns from Aroer in the south, which is at the edge of the Arnon River Valley, to the region of Gilead in the north. Some of their cities had walls around them, but we were still able to capture them. ³⁷But we did not go near the area where the Ammon people group live, or the banks of the Jabbok River, or the towns of the hill country, or any other place where Yahweh our God told us not to go."

Chapter 3

¹"Then we turned north and went toward the region of Bashan. Og, the king of that area, and all his soldiers marched south to fight against us at the city of Edrei. ²Yahweh said to me, 'Do not be afraid of him, because I will enable your army to defeat him and all his army and to capture all their land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who ruled in Heshbon.'

³So Yahweh enabled us to defeat King Og and all his army. We killed them all; we did not allow any of them to remain alive. ⁴There were sixty cities in that region of Argob, in King Og's kingdom of Bashan. But we captured all of them. ⁵All those cities had high walls around them with gates and bars. We also captured many villages that did not have walls around them. ⁶We completely destroyed everything, just as we had done in the area that King Sihon ruled. We killed all the men, women, and children. ⁷But from those cities we took for ourselves all the livestock and other valuable things.

⁸So at that time we took from those two kings of the Amor people group all the land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River gorge in the south to Mount Hermon in the north." ⁹(That mountain is called Sirion by the people of the city of Sidon and is called Senir by the Amor people group.) ¹⁰"We captured all the towns on the plateau, and all the region of Gilead, and all of Bashan as far east as the cities of Edrei and Salekah, which also belonged to Og's kingdom." ¹¹(Og was the last king who was a descendant of the Repha giants. His bed was made of iron. It was four meters long and two meters wide. It was in the city of Rabbah in the region of Ammon.)

¹²"From the land that we captured at that time, I allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the land north of the city of Aroer near the Arnon River, and some of the hill country of Gilead, along with the nearby cities. ¹³The other part of Gilead and all of Bashan, which was the region of Argob that King Og had ruled, I allotted to half of the tribe of Manasseh." (The entire region of Bashan is called the land of the Repha giants.) ¹⁴"Jair, a man from the tribe of Manasseh, conquered all of Bashan as far north as the border of the Geshur and Maacath territories. He gave his own name to the villages there, and they are still called the villages of Jair.

¹⁵The northern part of the Gilead region I allotted to the Machir clan, who are descendants of the tribe of Manasseh. ¹⁶I allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the southern part of Gilead, extending south to the Arnon River. The middle of the river is the southern boundary. The northern boundary is the Jabbok River, which is part of

the border of region of Ammon. ¹⁷The border extends from the plain along the east side of the Jordan valley, from Kinnereth in the north (known as the Sea of Galilee), to the Sea of Arabah (known as the Dead Sea) in the south, and to the slopes of Mount Pisgah on the east.

¹⁸At that time, I told you three tribes, 'Yahweh our God is giving you this land east of the Jordan River, for you to occupy. So now, your soldiers must take their weapons and go across the Jordan River ahead of the men from the other Israelite tribes to help them to conquer the land that God is going to give to them. ¹⁹But your wives and children and your very numerous cattle must stay in the towns that I have allotted to you. ²⁰Your men must help your fellow Israelites until Yahweh enables them to live there peacefully after they capture all the land that Yahweh our God is giving to them on the west side of the Jordan River, just like he did for you here on the east side of the river. After that, you all may return to this land that I have allotted to you.'

²¹And I told Joshua, 'You have seen everything that Yahweh our God did to those two kings, Sihon and Og. He will do the same thing to the people who are now in the land that you will be entering. ²²Do not be afraid of those people, because Yahweh our God is the one who will fight for you all.'"

²³"At that time, I earnestly prayed, saying ²⁴'Yahweh our Lord, you have merely begun to show me that you are very great and to show me the powerful things that you can do. There is certainly no god in heaven or on earth who can do the powerful things that you have done. ²⁵So please allow me to cross the Jordan River and to see the good land on the east side, the beautiful hill country and the mountains in Lebanon.'

²⁶But Yahweh was angry with me because of what your ancestors had done, so he would not pay attention to me. Instead, he said, 'That is enough talk from you! Do not talk to me about that again! ²⁷You will climb up to the top of Mount Pisgah and look toward the west and to the east, toward the north and to the south. You must look at it all carefully, because you will not cross the Jordan River to see the land from there. ²⁸But tell Joshua what he must do; encourage him to be strong, because he is the one who will lead the people across the river so they can occupy the land that you will see from the top of the mountain.'

²⁹So we remained in the Jordan River valley close to the town of Beth Peor."

Chapter 4

¹"Now, you Israelite people, obey all the rules and regulations that I will teach you. If you do that, you will remain alive and you will enter and occupy the land that Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, is giving to you. ²Do not add anything to what I command you, and do not take anything away from what I tell you. Obey all the commands of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you.

³You have seen what Yahweh did at Baal Peor. He destroyed all the people who worshiped the god Baal there, ⁴but all of you who faithfully continued to worship Yahweh our God are still alive today.

⁵Note that I have taught you all the rules and regulations, just like Yahweh our God told me to do. He wants you to obey them when you are living in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ⁶Obey them faithfully because, if you do that, you will show the people of other nations that you are very wise. When they hear about all these laws, they will say, 'The people of this great nation of Israel are certainly very wise!' ⁷Even if other nations are great, there is none of them that has a god who is as near to them as Yahweh our God is to us! ⁸And there is no other nation, even if it is a great nation, that has laws that are as just as the laws that I am speaking to you today.

⁹But be very careful! Do not forget what you have seen God do. Remember those things as long as you are alive. Tell them to your children and your grandchildren. ¹⁰Tell them about the day that your ancestors stood in the presence of Yahweh our God at Mount Sinai, when he said to me, 'Gather the people together, in order that they can hear what I say. I want them to learn to respect me and honor me for me as long as they are alive, and I want them to teach their children to do that also.' ¹¹Tell your children that your ancestors came near to the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with a fire that went up to the sky, and the mountain was covered with dark

clouds and black smoke. ¹²Then Yahweh spoke to your ancestors out of the middle of the fire. Your ancestors heard him speak, but they did not see him. They only heard his voice. ¹³And he declared to them his covenant that he wants you also to obey. He gave them the Ten Commandments. He wrote those on two stone tablets. ¹⁴Yahweh commanded me to teach all the rules and regulations to you, in order that you would obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

¹⁵On the day that Yahweh spoke to your ancestors at Mount Sinai, they did not see him. So be careful! ¹⁶Do not sin by making for yourselves any carved figure! Do not make anything that resembles the likeness of any person, either a man or a woman, ¹⁷or that resembles any animal or any bird ¹⁸or any reptile or any fish in the deep ocean. ¹⁹And be careful to not look up toward the sky and be tempted to worship anything that you see there—the sun or the moon or the stars. Yahweh our God has given those to help all people everywhere, but you must not worship them. ²⁰Yahweh has brought your ancestors out of Egypt, where they were suffering as though they were in a blazing furnace, in order that they would be people who belong to him, which is what you are today.

²¹But Yahweh was angry with me because of what your ancestors did. And he promised that I would never enter the land that he is giving to you. ²²He swore that I would die here in this land and never cross the Jordan River. But you will go across it, and you will occupy that land. ²³Be sure that you do not forget the covenant that Yahweh our God made with you, and do not make a carved figure in the likeness of anything he has forbidden you. ²⁴You must not do that because Yahweh your God wants everyone to worship him alone. He will destroy anyone who worships idols.

²⁵When you have been in the land of Canaan for a long time and you have children and grandchildren, do not sin by making a carved figure that represents anything, because Yahweh says that is evil, and if you do that, you will cause him to become angry with you and punish you. ²⁶Today I am requesting everyone who is in heaven and everyone who is on the earth to watch what you are doing. If you disobey what I am telling you, you will soon all die in the land that you will be crossing the Jordan River to occupy. You will not live very long there; Yahweh will completely get rid of many of you. ²⁷And the rest of you, Yahweh will force you to go and live among the people of many other nations. Only a few of you will survive there. ²⁸When you are in those nations, you will worship gods that are made of wood and stone, gods made by humans, gods that cannot see anything or hear anything or eat anything or smell anything. ²⁹But while you are there, you will try to know Yahweh your God, and if you try with your entire heart to know him, he will answer you. ³⁰In the future, when you are being mistreated there and all those bad things happen to you, you will again worship only Yahweh and obey him. ³¹Yahweh is a God who acts mercifully. If you continue to obey him, he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the agreement that he solemnly made with your ancestors."

³²"Now think about the past, about the time before you were born, about all the time since God first created people here on the earth. You could search everywhere, in heaven and on the earth. Has anything like this ever happened that is as great as what Yahweh did for us Israelite people? ³³Has any group ever remained alive after they heard a god speak to them from the middle of a fire, like we did? ³⁴Certainly God has never before tried to take a huge group of people from one nation to another location, like he did for us when he brought us out of Egypt. We saw Yahweh our God use his great power to do miracles to show us who he is, and sent plagues, and did many other things that terrified people, and how he rescued us when the army of Egypt tried to attack us.

³⁵Yahweh showed all these things to you, in order that you would know that only he is truly God, and that there is no other God. ³⁶He allowed your ancestors to hear him speak from heaven in order that he could discipline them. Here on the earth he allowed them to see his great fire on Mount Sinai, and he spoke to them from the middle of the fire. ³⁷Because he loved our ancestors, he chose you Israelites who are their descendants, and by his great power he brought your ancestors out of Egypt. ³⁸As they traveled, he expelled the people of nations that were greater and more powerful than they were, in order that they could capture their land and cause it to become yours, which is what is happening now.

³⁹So today you should think about the fact that Yahweh is God, that he rules in heaven and also on the earth, and that there is no other god. ⁴⁰Obey all the rules and regulations that I am giving to you today, in order that things

will go well for you and for your descendants, and that you will live a long time in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, for it to belong to you forever.”

⁴¹Then Moses chose three cities that are on the east side of the Jordan River. ⁴²If someone accidentally killed another person, a person who had not been his enemy previously, he could escape to one of those cities. He would be safe in one of those cities because the people there would protect him. ⁴³For the tribe of Reuben, Moses chose the city of Bezer in the wilderness; for the tribe of Gad, he chose the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead. For the tribe of Manasseh, Moses chose the city of Golan in the region of Bashan.

⁴⁴Moses gave God's laws to the Israelite people. ⁴⁵They included all the solemn commands, instructions and laws that Moses spoke to the people of Israel after they had come out of Egypt, ⁴⁶when they were in the valley east of the Jordan River. They were across from the town of Beth Peor, in the land that previously was ruled by Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who lived in Heshbon. Moses and the other Israelites had defeated his army when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷They captured Sihon's land and the land that Og, the king of the region of Bashan, had ruled. Those were the two kings who ruled the Amor people group in the area east of the Jordan River. ⁴⁸Their land extended from the city of Aroer in the south along the Arnon River, as far north as Mount Sirion, which most people call Mount Hermon. ⁴⁹It also included all the area in the plain east of the Jordan River valley, extending to the Sea of Arabah (known as the Dead Sea) and east to the slopes of Mount Pisgah.

Chapter 5

¹Moses summoned all the people of Israel and said to them,

“You Israelite people, listen to all the rules and decrees that I am giving to you today. Learn them and be sure to obey them. ²When we were at Mount Sinai, Yahweh our God made a covenant with us. ³But this covenant was not only for our ancestors. He made it also for us, who are alive now. ⁴Yahweh spoke with us face to face on that mountain, from the middle of the fire. ⁵On that day, I stood between your ancestors and Yahweh to tell them what he said, because they were afraid of the fire, and they did not want to climb up the mountain. This is what Yahweh said:

⁶I am Yahweh your God, the one you worship. I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you from being slaves there.

⁷You must worship only me; you must not worship any other god.

⁸You must not make a carved figure of anything that represents any living creature that exists in the skies, or on the earth, in the waters of the earth.

⁹You must not bow down to any idol and worship it, because I am Yahweh God, and I will not tolerate you doing that. I will punish anyone who does that, and their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. ¹⁰But I will steadfastly love thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments.

¹¹Do not speak my name carelessly or for wrong purposes, because I am Yahweh God, the one whom you should worship, and I will certainly punish those who do that.

¹²Do not forget that the seventh day of every week is for you to honor me specially, as I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you.

¹³There are six days each week for you to do all your work, ¹⁴but the seventh day is a rest day, a day dedicated to me, Yahweh your God. On that day you must not do any work. You and your sons and daughters and your male and female slaves must not work. You must not even force your livestock to work, and you must not tell foreigners to work, those who are living in your country. You must allow your slaves to rest on that day just like you do. ¹⁵Do not forget that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, Yahweh your God, brought you out from there by my very great power. That is the reason that I am commanding that all of you must rest on the seventh day each week.

¹⁶Honor your fathers and your mothers, just like I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you, in order that you as a people group may live a long time in the land that I, Yahweh your God, will give you, and in order that things will go well for you there.

¹⁷Do not murder anyone.

¹⁸Do not commit adultery.

¹⁹Do not steal anything.

²⁰Do not tell lies about anyone when you are speaking in court.

²¹Do not covet someone else's wife, someone else's house, someone else's fields, someone else's male slave or female slave, someone else's livestock, someone else's donkeys, or anything else that another person owns.'

²²Those are the commandments that Yahweh spoke to your ancestors. When they were gathered there at the bottom of the mountain, he spoke with a very loud voice from the middle of the fire, and there were dark clouds surrounding the mountain. He spoke only those Ten Commandments, no more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

²³After your ancestors heard Yahweh's voice when he spoke to them out of the darkness, while there was a big fire burning on the mountain, their leaders and elders came to me, ²⁴and one of them said, 'Listen to us! Yahweh our God showed us that he is very great and glorious when we heard him speak from the fire. Today we have realized that it is possible for us human beings to continue to live even though God has spoken to us. ²⁵But we are afraid that we will die. We are afraid that this immense fire will burn us all up, if we go on hearing Yahweh's voice. ²⁶We are the only people on earth who have remained alive after hearing the all-powerful God speak to them from a fire! ²⁷So Moses, you go up the mountain and listen to everything that Yahweh our God says. Then come back and tell us everything that he has said, and we will listen to what he has said and obey it.'

²⁸Yahweh heard your leaders say that, so when I went back up the mountain, Yahweh said to me, 'I have heard what your leaders have said, and what they have said is right. ²⁹I surely wish that they would always think like that and have an awesome respect for me and obey all my commandments, in order that things may go well for them and for their descendants forever.

³⁰So go down and tell them to return to their tents. ³¹But then you come back up here and stand near me, and I will give to you all the rules and decrees that I want them to obey. Then you can teach them to the people, in order that they will obey them when they are in the land that I am giving to them.'

³²So I went back down to the people and said to them, 'Be sure that you do everything that Yahweh our God has commanded us to do. Do not disobey any of his laws. ³³Conduct your lives as Yahweh our God has commanded us to do, in order that you may live a long time, and in order that things will go well for you when you are living in the land that you will occupy.'"

Chapter 6

¹"These are the commandments and rules and decrees that Yahweh our God commanded me to teach to you. He wants you to obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ²He wants you to honor him, and he wants you and your descendants to always obey all these rules and regulations that I am giving to you, in order that you may live for a long time. ³So, you Israelite people, listen to them carefully and obey them. If you do that, things will go well with you, and you will become a very numerous nation when you are living in that very fertile land. That is what Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, promised would happen.

⁴You Israelite people, listen! Only Yahweh is our God. ⁵You must love him with all your inner being and with all that you feel and in every way that you can. ⁶Never forget these commands that I am giving to you today. ⁷Teach them

to your children again and again. Talk about them all the time. When you are in your houses and when you are walking outside, talk about them also when you are lying down and when you wake up. ⁸Write them on tiny scrolls and fasten them to your arms, and write them on bands that you fasten to your foreheads to help you to remember them. ⁹Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your city gates.

¹⁰Yahweh our God solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that he would give you a land that already has in it large and prosperous cities that you did not build. ¹¹He said that the houses in those cities will already be full of many good things that someone else put there; you did not put them there. There will be wells that someone else dug. There will be vineyards and olive trees that someone else planted. So when Yahweh brings you into that land, and you have all that you want to eat, ¹²be sure that you do not forget Yahweh, who rescued you from being slaves in Egypt and gave all these things to you.

¹³You must honor Yahweh our God, and you must worship him alone. When you make a solemn oath to tell the truth or to do something, do it in his name. ¹⁴You must not worship any other gods, the gods that the people groups who live in this land worship. ¹⁵Yahweh our God, who lives among you, will not accept people who worship anyone or anything else. So if you worship any other god, Yahweh will be very angry with you, and he will destroy you completely. ¹⁶Do not do sinful things to find out whether Yahweh will punish you or not, like your ancestors did at Massah. ¹⁷Be sure that you always obey all the laws, the weighty instructions, and the regulations that he has given to you. ¹⁸Do what Yahweh says is right and good. If you do that, things will go well with you. You will be able to enter and occupy the good land that Yahweh solemnly promised to give to our ancestors. ¹⁹He will do that by driving out your enemies from that land, just as he promised to do.

²⁰In the future, your children will ask you, 'Why did Yahweh our God command us to obey all these rules and decrees?' ²¹Then you will tell them, 'Our ancestors were slaves of the king in Egypt, but Yahweh brought them out of Egypt by his great power. ²²They saw him do many kinds of miracles and terrifying things to the people of Egypt and to the king and his officials. ²³He rescued our ancestors from Egypt and brought them here to give them this land, just as he solemnly promised our ancestors that he would do. ²⁴And he commanded us to obey all these laws and to honor him, so that things would go well with us, and so that he would protect our nation and enable us to prosper, as he is doing now. ²⁵Yahweh our God will approve of us if we carefully obey everything that he has commanded us to do.'"

Chapter 7

¹"Yahweh our God will bring you to the land that you will soon enter and occupy. As you advance, he will drive out from that land seven people groups that are more powerful and more numerous than you are. These are the Heth, the Girgash, the Amor, the Canaan, the Periz, the Hiv, and the Jebus people groups. ²When Yahweh our God enables you to defeat them, you must kill them all. You must make no agreement with them, and you must not act mercifully toward them. ³You must not marry any of them. You must not allow your daughters to marry any of their sons, or allow your sons to marry any of their daughters. ⁴If you did that, those people would persuade your children to stop worshiping Yahweh and to worship other gods. If that happens, Yahweh will be very angry with you and he will destroy you very quickly. ⁵This is what you must do to those people: Tear down their altars, break apart the stone pillars that are dedicated to their gods, cut down the poles that they use when they worship the goddess Asherah, and burn their molded idols. ⁶You must do that because you are a group of people who belong only to Yahweh our God. He has chosen you from all the people groups in the world to be his own special people.

⁷It was not because you were more numerous than any other people group that Yahweh chose you; you are one of the smallest people groups on the earth. ⁸Instead, it is because Yahweh loved you and because he wanted to do what he solemnly promised to your ancestors. That is the reason that he rescued you by his great power from slavery in Egypt and from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. ⁹So do not forget that Yahweh is our God. He is faithful to us; he keeps his covenant for a thousand generations of people who love him and who obey his commandments.

¹⁰But as for those who hate him, he will pay them back; he will punish them and quickly destroy them.

¹¹So you must be sure to obey all the commandments and rules and decrees that I am giving to you today. ¹²If you pay attention to these decrees and always obey them, Yahweh our God will do what he has agreed to do for you, and he will faithfully love you, which is what he solemnly promised to your ancestors that he would do. ¹³He will love you and bless you. He will enable you to have many children. He will bless your fields, with the result that you will have plenty of grain and grapes to make wine and plenty of olive oil. You will have many cattle and sheep. He will do all these things for you in the land that he promised to your ancestors that he would give to you. ¹⁴He will bless you more than he will bless any other people group. All of you will be able to have children. All of your livestock will be able to produce offspring. ¹⁵And Yahweh will protect you from all illnesses. He will not make you to be sick with any of the dreadful diseases that our ancestors knew about in Egypt, but he will make all your enemies sick with them. ¹⁶You must destroy all the people groups that Yahweh our God enables you to conquer. Do not act mercifully toward any of them. And do not worship their gods, because if you do that, it would be like falling into a trap from which you will never be able to escape.

¹⁷Do not think to yourselves, 'These people groups are more numerous than we are. We will never be able to drive them out.' ¹⁸Do not be afraid of them. Instead, think about what Yahweh our God did to the king of Egypt and to all the people whom he ruled. ¹⁹Do not forget the terrible plagues that your ancestors saw him inflict on the people of Egypt, and the various kinds of miracles that God did in order to bring your ancestors out of Egypt. Yahweh our God will do the same kind of things to the people groups that you are afraid of now. ²⁰Furthermore, he will cause them to become terrified, and he will destroy those who remain alive and run away to hide from you. ²¹Do not be afraid of those people, because Yahweh our God will be with you. He is a great God; he is the one that people are afraid of. ²²He will gradually drive out those people groups. You should not try to drive all of them out at one time, because if you did that, the number of wild animals would quickly increase, and you would not be able to get rid of them. ²³Instead, Yahweh will enable you to defeat your enemies one people group at a time. He will cause them to panic until they are destroyed. ²⁴He will enable you to defeat their kings. After you kill them, their names will be forgotten. No people group will be able to stop you; you will destroy all of them. ²⁵You must burn the carved figures that represent their gods. Do not desire to take the silver or gold decorations that are on those idols, because if you take them for yourselves, they will be like a trap to catch you. Yahweh hates every part of those idols. ²⁶You must not bring any of those disgusting idols into your houses, because if you do that, God will curse you like he curses them. You must hate and despise those idols, because they are things that Yahweh has cursed and he promises to destroy them."

Chapter 8

¹"You must faithfully obey all the commandments that I am giving you today. If you do that, you will live a long time, you will become very numerous, and your people will occupy the land that Yahweh solemnly promised your ancestors that he would give to you. ²And do not forget how Yahweh our God led us as we traveled through the desert during these past forty years. He caused you to have many problems, because he wanted to cause you to realize that you needed to trust him and not yourselves. And he wanted to test you, to find out what you intended to do, whether you would obey his commandments or not. ³So he caused you to have difficulties. He allowed you to become hungry. Then he gave you manna, food from heaven, food that you and your ancestors had never eaten before. He did that to teach you that people need food for their bodies, but they also need food for their spirits, which comes from paying attention to everything that Yahweh says. ⁴During those forty years, our clothes did not wear out, and our feet did not swell from walking through the desert. ⁵Do not forget that Yahweh our God corrects us and punishes us, like parents correct their children.

⁶So obey the commandments of Yahweh our God, and conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and honor him.

⁷He is about to bring you into a good land, which has streams which flow down from the hills and flow out of springs in the valleys. ⁸It is a land on which wheat and barley grow, a land where there are fig trees and pomegranates, and a land where there are olive trees and honey. ⁹It is a land where there will be plenty of food for you, where you will not lack anything, a land which has iron ore in its rocks and from which you can dig copper ore

from its hills. ¹⁰Every day you will eat until your stomachs are full, and you will thank Yahweh our God for the fertile land that he has given you.

¹¹But when that happens, be sure not to forget Yahweh our God by disobeying his commandments and rules and regulations that I am giving to you today. ¹²Your stomachs will be full every day, and you will build good houses and live in them. But you might forget Yahweh's commandments. ¹³Indeed, when the number of your cattle and sheep has greatly increased, and when you have accumulated a large amount of silver and gold, and the amount of all your other possessions has greatly increased, ¹⁴be sure that you do not become proud and forget Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt and brought them out from there. ¹⁵Do not forget that he led them while they traveled through that huge and terrible desert, where there were poisonous snakes and scorpions. And do not forget that where the ground was very dry and there was no water, he caused water to flow for them out of solid rock. ¹⁶Do not forget that in that desert he gave your ancestors manna to eat, food that they had never eaten. He caused them to have, because he wanted to cause them to realize that they needed to trust him and not themselves. And he wanted to test them, to find out what they intended to do, in order that when those difficulties ended, he would do many good things for them. ¹⁷Be sure that you do not think to yourselves, 'I have acquired all these things by my own power and ability.' ¹⁸Do not forget that it is Yahweh our God who has enabled you to become rich. He does this because he faithfully does what he solemnly promised our ancestors that he would do.

¹⁹I solemnly warn you, that if you forget Yahweh our God and turn to other gods and start to bow down to them and worship them, he will certainly destroy you. ²⁰If you do not obey Yahweh our God, he will certainly destroy you just like he will destroy the people groups that you will fight against.

Chapter 9

¹You people of Israel, listen to me! You will soon cross the Jordan River. In the land that you will enter, there are large cities that have very high walls around them that seem to extend up to the sky. There are people groups in that land that are more numerous and more powerful than you are. ²Those people are very tall and strong. Some of them are giants who are descendants of Anak. You know about them, and you have heard people say that no one can defeat the descendants of Anak. ³I want you to know that Yahweh our God will go ahead of you. He will be like a raging fire. While you advance, he will defeat and destroy them. As a result, you will quickly be able to drive out some of them and kill the others, which is what Yahweh promised that you would do.

⁴After Yahweh our God has expelled them for you, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because we are righteous that Yahweh has enabled us to capture this land.' The truth is that it is because the people in that land are wicked that Yahweh will drive out them as you advance. ⁵I say again that it is not because you are righteous within yourselves or because you do things that are righteous that you will enter and capture that land. It is because those people groups are very wicked that Yahweh our God will expel them as you advance, and because he intends to do what he solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would do. ⁶I want you to know that it is not because you are righteous that Yahweh our God is giving you this good land. I say that because you are not righteous; you are a very stubborn people."

⁷"Never forget what your ancestors did in the desert that caused Yahweh our God to become angry. From the day that we left Egypt until the day that we arrived here, you also have continually rebelled against him. ⁸Even at Mount Sinai your ancestors caused Yahweh to become angry. Because he was very angry, he was ready to get rid of all of them. ⁹When I climbed the mountain to receive from him the stone tablets on which he had written the Ten Commandments, I stayed there forty days and nights, and during that time I did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰Yahweh gave me the two stone tablets on which he had written the commandments with his own fingers. They were the words that he had spoken to your ancestors from the fire on that mountain, when they were gathered together at the bottom of the mountain.

¹¹At the end of those forty days and nights, Yahweh gave me those two stone tablets on which he had written those commandments. ¹²But then he said to me, 'Go down the mountain immediately, because the people whom you are leading, the people whom you led out of Egypt, have committed a terrible sin! They have very quickly done what I commanded them not to do. They have made for themselves a cast figure of a calf to worship.'

¹³Then Yahweh said to me, 'I have been watching these people, and I see that they are very stubborn. ¹⁴So do not try to stop me. I am going to destroy all of them, with the result that no one anywhere will remember their names. Then I will enable you to become the ancestor of a nation that will be more numerous and more powerful than they are.'

¹⁵So I turned and went down the mountain, carrying in my hands the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. Fire was burning all over the mountain. ¹⁶I looked, and I was shocked to see that your ancestors had committed a great sin against Yahweh. They very quickly had begun to do what Yahweh our God had commanded them not to do. They had requested Aaron to make for them a metal image of a calf to worship. ¹⁷So while they were watching, I lifted up those two stone tablets and threw them on the ground, and they broke into pieces.

¹⁸Then I prostrated myself on the ground in Yahweh's presence as I had done before, and I did not eat or drink anything for forty days and nights. I did that because your ancestors had sinned against Yahweh and caused him to become very angry. ¹⁹I was afraid that because Yahweh was very angry with them, he would get rid of all of them. But again I prayed that he would not do that, and again he listened to me and answered my prayer.

²⁰Yahweh was also very angry with Aaron for making that golden calf and was ready to kill him. But at the same time I prayed for Aaron also, and Yahweh answered my prayer. ²¹Your ancestors had sinned by requesting Aaron to make a metal statue of a calf. So I took that statue and I melted it in a fire and crushed it and ground it into very tiny pieces. Then I threw those tiny pieces into the stream that flowed down the mountain.

²²Your ancestors also caused Yahweh to become very angry by what they did at places that they named Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah.

²³And when we were at Kadesh Barnea, Yahweh said to your ancestors, 'Go up and capture the land that I am about to give to you!' But they rebelled against him. They did not trust him, and they did not obey what he told them to do. ²⁴Your ancestors rebelled against Yahweh from the first day that I knew them, in Egypt, and you have been exactly the same as your ancestors.

²⁵So, as I said, I lay on the ground in Yahweh's presence for forty days and nights, because Yahweh had said that he would destroy your ancestors. ²⁶And I prayed to Yahweh, saying, 'Lord Yahweh, these people belong to you; do not destroy them. They are people whom you rescued and brought out of Egypt by your very great power. ²⁷Do not forget what you promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ignore how stubborn and wicked these people have been, and the sin that they have committed. ²⁸If you do not do that, and if you destroy them, the people of Egypt will hear about it and say that you were not able to bring them into the land that you promised to give to them. They will say that you took them into the desert only to kill them there because you hated them. ²⁹Do not forget that they are your people. You chose them to belong to you. You brought them out from Egypt by your very great power.'"

Chapter 10

¹"Then Yahweh said to me, 'Cut two stone tablets like the first ones. And make a wooden chest to put them in. Then bring the tablets up to me on this mountain. ²I will write on those tablets the same words that I wrote on the first tablets, the ones that you broke. Then you can put them in the chest.'

³So I made a chest. I used wood from an acacia tree to make it. Then I cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I went up the mountain carrying the tablets. ⁴There Yahweh wrote on the tablets the same Ten Commandments that he had written on the first tablet. They are the commandments that he had spoken to your

ancestors from the midst of the fire on the mountain, when they had gathered at the bottom of the mountain. Then Yahweh gave the tablets to me. ⁵Carrying the tablets, I turned and went down the mountain. Then, just as he had commanded, I put them in the chest that I had made. And they are still there."

⁶(Then, from the wells that belonged to the people of Jaakan, the Israelite people traveled to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar took his place and became the high priest. ⁷From there, the Israelites traveled to Gudgodah, and from there to Jotbathah, which was a place that had many streams. ⁸At that time, Yahweh chose the tribe of Levi to carry the chest that contained the tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments, and to stand in Yahweh's presence in the sacred tent, to offer sacrifices, and to pray for Yahweh to bless the people. They are still doing those things at the present time. ⁹That is the reason that the tribe of Levi did not receive any land like the other tribes did. What they received was the honor of being Yahweh's priests, which is what he said that they should do.)

¹⁰Moses continued to speak: "I stayed on the mountain forty days and nights, just like I did the first time. I prayed to Yahweh, and he answered my prayers again and said that he would not destroy your ancestors. ¹¹Then Yahweh said to me, 'Continue your journey, going in front of the people, to occupy the land that I solemnly promised your ancestors that I would give to you.'"

¹²"Now, you Israelite people, I will tell you what Yahweh our God says that you do. He requires you to honor him, to conduct your lives as he wants you to, to love him, and to serve him with all that you desire and all that you feel, ¹³and to obey all of his commandments which I am giving to you today, so they will help you.

¹⁴Do not forget that Yahweh our God owns even the sky and everything that is in it. He also owns the earth and everything that is on it. ¹⁵But although he owns all those things, Yahweh also loved your ancestors; from all the people groups on the earth he chose us, their descendants, and we are still his people. ¹⁶So you must change your inner beings and stop being stubborn. ¹⁷Yahweh our God is greater than all gods, and he is greater than all rulers. He is very powerful, more than others, and he does not accept bribes. ¹⁸He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly. He loves even foreigners who live among us Israelite people, and he gives them food and clothes. ¹⁹So you must love those foreigners too, because you were once foreigners when you were living in Egypt. ²⁰Be sure to honor Yahweh our God and worship only him. Be faithful to him, and say that he should punish you if you do not do what you promise. ²¹He is the one whom you must praise. He is our God, and we have seen the great and awesome things that he has done for us. ²²When our ancestors, Jacob and his family, went down to Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now Yahweh our God has caused us to be as numerous as the stars in the sky."

Chapter 11

¹"Because of all that Yahweh your God has done for you, you must love and continually obey all his rules and decrees and commandments. ²It was you and your ancestors, not your children, whom he punished because you disobeyed him, putting you through many difficulties to teach and train you. So starting today, continue to think about how his punishment, his mighty power, and his great strength to do whatever he wants to do to you. ³Remember the many different miracles that he performed in Egypt, miracles that showed how powerful and great he is. Think about what he did to the king of Egypt and to all the land that he ruled. ⁴Your children did not see the army of Egypt, or their horses and their chariots destroyed by Yahweh's power. Your children did not see how Yahweh caused the Sea of Reeds to flood and sweep away the army of Egypt as they were coming after their ancestors. Your children did not understand that Yahweh continues to make Egypt's army weak even to this day. ⁵Your children do not know how Yahweh took care of their ancestors in the desert before they all came to this place. ⁶Think about what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the two sons of Eliab from the tribe of Reuben. While all of your ancestors were watching, the earth split open, and they fell into the opening and disappeared, along with their families and their tents, their servants, and their animals. ⁷You and your ancestors have seen all these miracles that Yahweh performed.

⁸So obey all the commandments that I am giving you today, in order that you will be strong and able to cross the river and occupy the land that you are about to enter, ⁹and in order that you will live for a long time in that land, a land that Yahweh solemnly promised your ancestors that he would give to them and to their descendants, a land that is very fertile. ¹⁰The land that you are about to enter and occupy is not like the land of Egypt, where your ancestors lived. In Egypt, after they planted seeds, it was necessary for them to work hard to water the plants that grew. ¹¹But the land that you are about to enter is a land where there are many hills and valleys, where there is plenty of rain. ¹²Yahweh takes care of that land. He watches over it every day, from the beginning of each year to the end of each year.

¹³Today I am commanding you to love Yahweh our God and to serve him with your entire inner beings. If you do that, ¹⁴each year he will send rain on your land at the right times. As a result, you will have grain and grapes to make wine and olives to make olive oil. ¹⁵And he will cause grass to grow in your fields for your livestock to eat. You will have all the food that you want.

¹⁶But I warn you, do not stop worshiping Yahweh our God; do not start to worship other gods, ¹⁷because if you do that, Yahweh will become very angry with you. He will prevent any rain from falling. As a result, the crops will not grow, and you will soon die from hunger in the good land that Yahweh is about to give to you. ¹⁸So, keep thinking about what Yahweh has commanded you. Write these words on tiny scrolls and fasten them to your arms, and write them on bands that you fasten to your foreheads to help you to remember them. ¹⁹Teach them to your children again and again. Talk about them all the time: When you are in your houses and when you are walking outside; talk about them when you are lying down and when you are doing things. ²⁰Write them on the doorposts and on the gates of your cities. ²¹Do that in order that you and your children will live for such a very long time in the land that Yahweh promised to our ancestors that he would give to them. That land will belong to you and your descendants as long as there is a sky above the earth.

²²Faithfully continue to obey what I am commanding you to do—to love Yahweh our God, and to conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and to be faithful to him. ²³If you do that, Yahweh will drive out all the people groups in that land as you advance, people groups that are more numerous and more powerful than you are. ²⁴All the ground in that land on which you walk will be yours. Your territory will extend from the desert in the south to the Lebanon Mountains in the north, and from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ²⁵Yahweh our God will cause all the people in that land to be very afraid of you, which is what he promised, with the result that no people group will be able to stop you.

²⁶Listen carefully: Today I am telling you that Yahweh will either bless you or he will curse you. ²⁷If you obey the commandments of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you today, he will bless you. ²⁸But if you do not obey them, and if you stop worshiping him and start worshiping other gods to whom you were never faithful before, he will curse you. ²⁹And when Yahweh brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, some of you must stand on top of Mount Gerizim and proclaim what will cause Yahweh to bless you, and the others must stand on top of Mount Ebal and proclaim what will cause Yahweh to curse you.” ³⁰(Those two mountains are west of the Jordan River, west of the plain along the Jordan, in the land where the Canaanites live. They live close to the sacred trees near Gilgal.) ³¹“You will soon cross the Jordan River to occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. When you enter that land and start to live there, ³²be sure to obey all the rules and decrees that I am giving to you today.”

Chapter 12

¹“I will now tell you the rules and decrees that you must faithfully obey in the land that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, is giving to you to occupy. You must obey these laws all the time that you are alive. ²When you drive out those people groups whose land you will take, you must destroy all the places where they worshiped their gods, places on the tops of mountains and hills and beside large trees. ³You must tear down their altars and

smash their pillars. Burn the statues of their goddess Asherah and chop down their carved figures, in order that no one will ever worship them in those places again.

⁴Do not worship Yahweh like the people in Canaan worship their gods. ⁵Instead, you must go to the place that Yahweh will choose. It will be in the area where one of your tribes will live. That is where you must enter Yahweh's presence and worship him. ⁶That is the place where you must bring your sacrifices that the priests will burn whole on the altar, and your other sacrifices that you yourselves present to me, your tithes, other offerings that you promise to give me, the firstborn animals from your cattle and sheep, or any other kind of offering. ⁷There, in the presence of Yahweh our God, you and your families will eat the good things that you have worked to produce, and you will be happy, because he has blessed you very, very much.

⁸When you are in that land, you must not do some of the things that we have been doing. Until now, you have all been worshiping Yahweh the way you want to, ⁹because you have not yet arrived in the land which he will allow you to permanently possess, where you will be able to live peacefully. ¹⁰But when you cross the Jordan River, you will start to live in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. He will protect you from all your enemies that will surround you, and you will live peacefully.

¹¹Yahweh will choose one place where he wants you to worship him. That is the place to which you must bring all the offerings that I command you to bring: The sacrifices that the priests will burn whole on the altar, your other sacrifices, other offerings that you yourselves decide to present, your tithes, and all the special offerings that you will solemnly promise to give to Yahweh. ¹²Rejoice there in the presence of Yahweh, along with your children, your male and female servants, and the descendants of Levi who live in your towns. Do not forget that the descendants of Levi will not have their own land, like you do. ¹³Be sure that you do not offer burnt animals as sacrifices anywhere you want to. ¹⁴You must offer them only in the place that Yahweh will choose for you, in an area that belongs to one of your tribes. That is the only place where he wants you to offer sacrifices that the priests will burn whole on the altar, and to do the other things that I am commanding you to do when you worship him.

¹⁵However, God will permit you to kill and eat the meat of your animals in the places where you live. As often as you want to, you may eat meat from the animals that Yahweh our God will bless you by giving them to you. Those who are at that time clean or unclean may all eat that meat, just like you would eat the meat of a deer or an antelope. ¹⁶But you must not eat the blood of any animal; you must let the blood drain onto the ground before you cook the meat. ¹⁷In the places where you live, you must not eat the things that you are offering to Yahweh: You must not eat the tithes of your grain or of your wine, or of your olive oil, or the firstborn of your cattle and sheep, or the offerings that you yourselves decide to present to Yahweh, or any other offerings. ¹⁸Instead, you and your children and your male and female servants and the descendants of Levi who live in your towns must eat those things in the presence of Yahweh in the place that he chooses. And you should be happy about everything that you have done. ¹⁹Be sure that you take care of the descendants of Levi all during the time that you live in your land.

²⁰When Yahweh our God gives you much more land than you will have at first—and he has promised to do this, and when you say, 'I would like some meat to eat,' you are permitted to eat meat whenever you want to. ²¹If the place that Yahweh our God chooses to be the place for you to worship him is far from where you live, you are permitted to kill some of your cattle or sheep that Yahweh has given to you, and you may eat that meat in the town where you live, just like I have told you to do. ²²Those who are either clean or unclean at the time may eat that meat, just like you would eat the meat of a deer or an antelope. ²³But be sure that you do not eat the blood of any animal, because it is the blood that sustains life in living beings. You must not eat the life along with the meat. ²⁴Do not eat the blood; instead, let it drain onto the ground. ²⁵If you obey this command and do what Yahweh says is right for you to do, things will go well for you and for your descendants.

²⁶But the offerings that Yahweh has told you to set aside for him, and the other offerings that you yourselves decide to give, you must take to the place that he will choose. ²⁷There the priest will burn those offerings on Yahweh's altar. He will kill the animals, drain out the blood, and throw some of it onto the sides of the altar. And you may eat some of that meat. ²⁸Faithfully obey all these things that I have commanded you. If you do that, things will

go well forever for you and your descendants, because you will be doing what Yahweh our God says is right for you to do and what pleases him.

²⁹When you enter the land that you will occupy, as you advance, Yahweh our God will destroy the people groups that live there. ³⁰After he does that, be sure that you do not worship the gods that they have been worshiping, because if you do that, it will be like a trap that will catch you. Do not ask anyone about those gods, saying, 'Tell me how they worshiped their gods, in order that I can worship Yahweh in the same way.' ³¹Do not try to worship Yahweh our God like they have worshiped their gods, because when they worship them, they do disgusting things, things that Yahweh hates. The worst thing that they do is that they sacrifice their own children and burn them on their altars.

³²Be sure to do everything that I have commanded you to do. Do not add anything to these commands, and do not take anything away from them.

Chapter 13

¹Possibly there will be people among you who say that they are prophets. They may say that they are able to interpret the meaning of dreams or perform various kinds of miracles. ²They will say those things in order to induce you to worship gods that you have never known about before. But even if what they predict happens, ³do not pay attention to what they say. Yahweh our God will be testing you to find out if you love him with all your inner being. ⁴You must conduct your lives as Yahweh our God wants you to, and you must honor him, do what he tells you to do, and trust in him.

⁵But you must execute anyone who falsely says that he is a prophet, or someone who falsely says that he can interpret dreams, or who tells you to rebel against Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt. People like that are only wanting to cause you to stop living as Yahweh has commanded you to do. Execute them to get rid of this evil among you. ⁶It does not matter if even your brother or your daughter or your wife or some close friend secretly urges you and says 'Let us worship other gods, gods that neither you nor your ancestors have ever known about.' ⁷Some of them may encourage you to worship gods that people groups that live near you worship, or gods that groups who live far away worship. ⁸Do not do what they suggest. Do not even listen to them. Do not act mercifully toward them, and do not keep secret what they have done. ⁹Execute them! You be the first one to throw stones at them to kill them; then everyone else must throw stones at them, too. ¹⁰Kill such people by throwing stones at them, because they are trying to cause you to stop worshiping Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt. ¹¹When they are executed, all the Israelite people will hear what happened, and they will become afraid, and none of them will do such an evil thing again.

¹²When you are living in one of the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, you may hear ¹³that some worthless people among you are deceiving the people of their town, saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods.' ¹⁴Examine the facts about it thoroughly. Suppose you find out that it is true that such a disgraceful thing has happened. ¹⁵Then kill all the people in that town. And kill all their livestock, too. Destroy the town completely. ¹⁶Gather all the possessions that belonged to the people who lived there and pile them up in the city plaza. Then burn the town and everything in it, as though it were an offering to Yahweh that was completely burned on the altar. The ruins must stay there forever; the town must never be rebuilt. ¹⁷You must not take for yourselves anything that Yahweh has said must be destroyed, because if you do what I say, Yahweh will stop being angry with you, and he will act mercifully toward you. And he will cause you to have many children, which is what he promised our ancestors that he would do. ¹⁸Yahweh our God will do all those things if you do what he is telling you to do, and if you obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today and do what Yahweh says is right for you to do.

Chapter 14

¹We are people who belong to Yahweh our God. So when people die, do not show that you are grieving by gashing yourselves or by shaving the hair on your foreheads like the other people groups do. ²We belong to Yahweh alone. Yahweh chose us from all the other people groups on the earth to be his special people.

³Do not eat anything that Yahweh detests. ⁴The animals whose meat you are permitted to eat are cattle, sheep, goats, ⁵all kinds of deer, gazelles, wild goats, and mountain sheep. ⁶Those are animals that have split hooves and that also chew the cud. ⁷But there are other animals that chew the cud that you must not eat. Those are camels, rabbits, and rock badgers. They chew the cud, but their hooves are not split. So they are not acceptable for you to eat. ⁸Do not eat pigs. They are unacceptable for you to eat; their hooves are split, but they do not chew the cud. Do not eat the meat of those animals; do not even touch their dead bodies. ⁹You are permitted to eat any fish that has scales and fins. ¹⁰But anything else that lives in the water that does not have scales and fins, you must not eat, because they must be unacceptable to you.

¹¹You are permitted to eat the flesh of any bird that is acceptable to Yahweh. ¹²But eagles, vultures, osprey, ¹³buzzards, and all kinds of kites you may not eat. ¹⁴You are not permitted to eat all kinds of crows and ravens, ¹⁵and the ostrich, and the night hawk, the sea gull, no kind of hawk, ¹⁶the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, ¹⁷pelicans, vultures that eat dead animals, cormorants. ¹⁸And you are not permitted to eat the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat you must not eat.

¹⁹All insects with wings and which swarm are unacceptable to Yahweh; do not eat them. ²⁰But other insects with wings are acceptable to eat.

²¹Do not eat any animal that has died naturally. You may allow foreigners who live among you to eat those things, or you may sell them to other foreigners. But you belong to Yahweh our God; those who belong to him are not permitted to eat the flesh of animals whose blood has not been drained out.

You must not cook a young sheep or goat in its mother's milk."

²²"Once each year you must set apart a tenth of all the crops that are produced in your fields. ²³Take them to the place that Yahweh our God will choose for you to worship him. There you must eat the tenth of your grain, your wine, your olive oil, and the meat of the firstborn male animals of your cattle and your sheep. Do this in order that you may learn to always honor Yahweh, the one who has blessed you by giving you these things. ²⁴If the place that Yahweh has chosen for you to worship him is very far from your home, with the result that you are not able to take there the tithes of your crops with which Yahweh has blessed you, do this: ²⁵Sell the tenth of your crops, wrap the money carefully in a cloth, and take it with you to the place of worship that Yahweh has chosen. ²⁶There, with that money, you may buy whatever you want to—beef or lamb or wine or fermented drinks. And there, in the presence of Yahweh, you and your families should eat and drink those things and be happy. ²⁷But be sure to not neglect to help the descendants of Levi who live in your towns, because they will not own any land.

²⁸At the end of every three years, bring a tithe of all your crops that have been produced in that year and store it in your towns. ²⁹That food will be for the descendants of Levi, because they will not have their own land, and for the foreigners who live among you, and for orphans and widows who live in your towns. They are permitted to come to where the food is stored and take what they need. Do that in order that Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do.

Chapter 15

¹At the end of every seven years, you must cancel all debts. ²Do it like this: Each of you who has lent money to a fellow Israelite must cancel that debt. You must not insist that he pay it back. You must do that because Yahweh has declared that the debts must be canceled every seven years. ³During that year you may require foreigners who

live among you to pay what they owe you, but you must not demand that from any fellow Israelite. ⁴⁻⁵Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that he is giving to you. If you obey Yahweh our God and obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today, there will not be any poor people among you. ⁶Yahweh our God will bless you like he has promised to do, and you will be able to lend money to people of other people groups, but you will not need to borrow from any of them. You will control the finances of many people groups, but they will not control your finances.

⁷In the towns that Yahweh our God is giving to you, if there are any Israelites who are poor, do not be selfish and refuse to help them. ⁸Instead, be generous and lend them the money that they need. ⁹Be sure that you do not say to yourself, 'The year when debts will be canceled is near, so I do not want to lend anyone any money now, because he will not need to pay it back when that year comes.' It would be evil to even think that. If you act in an unfriendly way toward a needy fellow Israelite, and give him nothing, he will cry out to Yahweh against you, and Yahweh will say that you have sinned by not helping that person. ¹⁰Give freely to poor people and give generously. If you do that, Yahweh will bless you in everything that you do. ¹¹There will always be some poor people in your land, so I command you to give generously to poor people, to your fellow Israelites.

¹²If any of your fellow Israelite men or women sell themselves to one of you to become your slave, you must free them after they have worked for you for six years. When the seventh year comes, you must free them. ¹³When you free them, do not allow them to go empty-handed. ¹⁴Instead, give to them generously from the things with which Yahweh has blessed you—sheep, grain, and wine. ¹⁵Do not forget that your ancestors were once slaves in Egypt and that Yahweh our God freed them. That is the reason that I am now commanding you to do this.

¹⁶But one of your slaves may say, 'I do not want to leave you.' Perhaps he loves you and your family because you have treated him well. ¹⁷If he says that, take him to the door of your house and, while he is standing against the doorway, pierce one of his earlobes with an awl. That will indicate that he will be your slave for the rest of his life. Do the same thing to any female slave who does not want to leave you.

¹⁸Do not complain when you are required to free your slaves. Keep in mind that they served you for six years, and that you paid them only half as much as you pay the servants that you hire. If you free them, Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do.

¹⁹Set aside for the honor of Yahweh our God the firstborn male animals from your cattle and sheep. Do not force them to do any work for you, and do not shear the wool of the firstborn animals. ²⁰You and your family must kill them and eat their meat in the presence of Yahweh at the place that he chooses for you to worship him. ²¹But if the animals have any defects, if they are lame or blind, or if they have any other serious defect, you must not sacrifice them to Yahweh our God. ²²You may kill and eat the meat of those animals in your towns. Those who have done things that cause them to become unacceptable to God and those who have not done such things are permitted to eat that meat, just like anyone is permitted to eat the meat of a gazelle or a deer. ²³But you must not eat any of the blood; you must drain all the blood on the ground when you kill those animals.

Chapter 16

¹Each year honor Yahweh our God by celebrating the Passover Festival in the month of Aviv in early spring. It was on a night in that month that Yahweh rescued your ancestors from Egypt. ²In order to celebrate that festival, go to the place that Yahweh will choose for you to worship him, and offer there one young animal from your cattle or your sheep to be the Passover sacrifice. ³When you eat the Passover meal, the bread that you eat must not have yeast in it. You must eat this kind of bread, which will be called the bread of suffering, for seven days. This is to help you to remember all during the time that you are alive that when your ancestors left Egypt, where they were suffering because they were slaves, they left very quickly. They did not have time to put in yeast and wait for the dough to swell up. ⁴During that festival, which will last for seven days, you must not have any yeast in any house in your land. Furthermore, the meat of the animal that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day of the Passover Festival must be eaten during that night; do not allow any of it to remain until the next day.

⁵⁻⁶To honor Yahweh our God, you must offer the Passover sacrifice only at the place that he chooses for you to worship him; do not offer that sacrifice in any other town in the land that Yahweh is giving to you. Offer that sacrifice when the sun is setting, at the same time of day that your ancestors started to leave Egypt. ⁷Boil the meat and eat it at the place of worship that Yahweh our God chooses. The next morning, you may return to your tents. ⁸Each day for six days the bread that you eat must have no yeast in it. On the seventh day, you must all gather to worship Yahweh our God. It will be a day of rest, you must not do any work on that day.

⁹Each year, from the day that you start to harvest your grain, count seven weeks. ¹⁰Then, to honor Yahweh our God, celebrate the Festival of Pentecost. Do that by bringing to him an offering of grain. Yahweh has blessed you by causing it to grow in your fields during that year. If you had a big harvest, bring a big offering. If you had a small harvest, bring a small offering. ¹¹Each married couple should be joyful in the presence of Yahweh. Their children, their servants, the descendants of Levi who are in that town, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who are living among you, should also be joyful. Bring those offerings to the place of worship that Yahweh will choose.

¹²When you celebrate these festivals by obeying these commands, remember that your ancestors were slaves in Egypt.

¹³Each year, after you have threshed all your grain and pressed the juice from all your grapes, you must celebrate the Festival of Shelters for seven days. ¹⁴Each married couple along with their children, their servants, the descendants of Levi who are in that town, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who are living among you, should be joyful in the presence of Yahweh. ¹⁵Honor Yahweh our God by celebrating this festival for seven days in the place that he chooses for you to worship him. You should all be joyful, because Yahweh will have blessed your harvest and all the other work that you have done.

¹⁶So, each year all of you Israelite men must gather to worship Yahweh our God at the place that he will choose, to celebrate three festivals: The Festival of Bread with no Yeast, the Festival of Pentecost, and the Festival of Shelters. No one should come before Yahweh without an offering. Each of you men must bring an offering for Yahweh to these festivals. ¹⁷The offerings should be in proportion to the blessings that Yahweh has given you during that year.

¹⁸Appoint judges and other officials throughout your tribes, in all the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. They must judge people fairly. ¹⁹They must not judge unjustly. They must not favor one person more than another. The judges must not accept bribes, because if a judge accepts a bribe, even if he is wise and honest, it will be very difficult for him to judge fairly; he will do what the person who gave him the bribe wants him to do and declare that the innocent people must be punished. ²⁰You must be completely fair and just, in order that you may live long enough to occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

²¹When you make an altar to worship Yahweh our God, do not put next to it any wooden pole that represents the goddess Asherah. ²²And do not set up any stone pillar to worship any idol, because Yahweh hates them.

Chapter 17

¹Do not sacrifice to Yahweh our God any cattle or sheep or goats that have any defects, because Yahweh detests that kind of gift.

²When you are living in any of the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, suppose some man or woman sins by disobeying the covenant that Yahweh has made with you. ³Suppose that person has worshiped and bowed down to other gods, or the sun, or the moon, or the stars. They do what I did not command. ⁴If someone tells you that some person has been doing that, you must investigate it thoroughly to see whether this detestable thing has happened in Israel. ⁵If it has happened, then you must take outside the town the man or woman who has done it. Then you must kill that person by throwing stones at him or her. ⁶But you are allowed to execute such people only if at least two witnesses testify that they saw them doing that. They must not be executed if there is

only one witness. ⁷The witnesses should throw stones at the guilty person. Then the other people should throw stones until that person dies. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you.

⁸Sometimes it will be very difficult for a judge to decide what really happened. He might be trying to decide whether, when someone injured or killed another person, that person did it accidentally or deliberately. Or he might be trying to decide if some person is taking another person to court unfairly. If in any town it is very difficult to know what really happened, and if the judge cannot decide it, you should go to the place that Yahweh our God has chosen for you to worship him. ⁹There you should present the case to the descendants of Levi who are priests, and to the judge who is serving at that time, and they should decide what should be done. ¹⁰After they make their decision, you must do what they tell you to do. ¹¹Accept what they have decided, and do what they say that you should do. Do not try to change in any way what they have decided. ¹²You must execute anyone who proudly disobeys the judge or the priest who stands there in the presence of Yahweh and decides what should be done. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you. ¹³Then after that person is executed, all the people will hear about it, and they will be afraid, and none of them will act that way anymore.

¹⁴I know that after you have occupied the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you are living there, you will say, 'We should have a king to rule over us, like the kings that other nations around us have.' ¹⁵Yahweh our God will permit you to have a king, but be sure that you appoint someone whom he has chosen. That man must be an Israelite; you must not appoint someone who is a foreigner to be your king. ¹⁶After he becomes the king, he should not acquire a large number of horses for himself. He should not send people to Egypt to buy horses for him, because Yahweh said to you, 'Never return to Egypt for anything!' ¹⁷And he must not have a lot of wives, because if he did that, they would turn him away from worshiping only Yahweh. And he must not acquire a lot of silver and gold.

¹⁸When he becomes your king, he must appoint someone to copy these laws. He must copy them from the scroll that is kept by the priests descended from Levi. ¹⁹He must keep this new scroll near him and read from it every day of his life, in order that he may learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh, and to faithfully obey all the rules and regulations that are written in these laws. ²⁰If he does that, he will not think that he is more important than his fellow Israelites, and he will completely obey Yahweh's commands. As a result, he and his descendants will rule as kings in Israel for many years."

Chapter 18

¹"The priests, who are all from the tribe of Levi, will not receive any land in Israel. Instead, they will receive some of the food that other people offer to be burned on the altar to be sacrificed to Yahweh and some of the other sacrifices that will be offered to Yahweh. ²They will not be allotted any land like the other tribes will be. What they will receive is the honor of being Yahweh's priests, which is what he said that they should have.

³When the people bring an ox or a sheep to be sacrificed, they must give to the priests the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach of those animals. ⁴You must also give to them the first part of the grain that you harvest, and the first part of the wine that you make, and the first part of the olive oil that you make, and the first part of the wool that you shear from your sheep. ⁵You must do this because Yahweh our God has chosen the tribe of Levi from all of your tribes, in order that it would be ones from that tribe who would always be the priests who would serve him.

⁶If any man from the tribe of Levi who has been living in one of the towns in Israel wants to come from there to the place of worship that Yahweh has chosen, and to start living there, ⁷he is permitted to serve Yahweh there as a priest, just like the other men from the tribe of Levi who have been serving there. ⁸He must be given the same amount of food that the other priests receive. He is permitted to keep the money that his relatives receive for selling some of their possessions and send to him.

⁹When you enter the land that Yahweh our God is giving you, you must not imitate the disgusting things that the people groups who are there now do. ¹⁰You must not sacrifice any of your children by burning them on your altars.

Do not try to use supernatural power to discover what will happen in the future. Do not try to use magic to find out what will happen in the future. Do not interpret omens to find out what will happen. Do not practice sorcery. Do not put spells on people. ¹¹Do not try to talk with spirits of dead people. Do not do magic. ¹²Yahweh hates people who do any of those disgusting things. And as you advance through that land, he is going to drive out the people groups because they do those disgusting things. ¹³But you must always be faithful to Yahweh and avoid doing any of those disgusting things.

¹⁴The people groups that you are about to expel from the land that you will occupy consult soothsayers and those who practice divination. But as for you, Yahweh our God does not allow you to do that. ¹⁵Some day he will send from among you a prophet like me. He will tell you what will happen in the future, and you must obey him. ¹⁶On the day that your ancestors were gathered at the bottom of Mount Sinai, they pleaded with me saying, 'We do not want Yahweh to speak to us again, and we do not want to see this huge fire that is burning on the mountain!' Your ancestors said that because they were afraid that they would die if Yahweh spoke to them again.

¹⁷Then Yahweh said to me, 'What they have said is true. ¹⁸So I will send from among them a prophet like you. I will tell him what to say, and then he will tell people everything that I tell him to say. ¹⁹He will speak for me. And I will punish anyone who does not heed what he says. ²⁰But if any person says that he is a prophet and dares to speak a message which he falsely says comes from me but which I did not tell him to speak, or anyone who speaks a message that he says other gods have revealed to him, he must be executed for doing that.'

²¹But perhaps you will say to yourself, 'How can we know if a message that someone tells us does not come from Yahweh?' ²²The answer is that when someone speaks a message about what will happen in the future, a message that he says was revealed by Yahweh, if what he says does not happen, you will know that the message did not come from Yahweh. That person has wrongly claimed that it was revealed to him by Yahweh. So you do not need to be afraid of anything that he says.

Chapter 19

¹After Yahweh our God has destroyed the people groups from the land that he is giving to you, and after you have driven them out from their cities and you start to live in their houses, ²⁻³you must divide into three parts the land that he is giving to you. Then select a city in each part. You must make good roads in order that people can get to those cities easily. Someone who kills another person can escape to one of those cities to be safe.

⁴This is the rule about someone who has killed another person. If someone accidentally kills another person who was not his enemy, he may escape to one of those cities and be safe. ⁵For example, if two men go into the forest to cut some wood, if the axe head comes off the handle while one of them is chopping down a tree and the ax head strikes and kills the other man, the man who was using the ax will be allowed to run to one of those cities and be safe there, because the people of that city will protect him. ⁶Because he accidentally killed someone, and because the man was not his enemy, he can try to run to one of those cities. If there were only one city, it may be a long distance to that city. Then if the relative of the man who was killed to get revenge, is very angry, he may be able to catch the other person before he arrives at that city. ⁷Therefore, I give you this command, that you select three cities for this purpose.

⁸⁻⁹If you do everything that I am today commanding you to do, and if you love Yahweh our God, and if you conduct your lives as he wants you to do, Yahweh our God will give you much more land than you will have when you first occupy it, which is what he promised to do. He will give you all the land which he promised your ancestors that he would give to you. When he gives you that land, you must select three more cities to which people may escape.

¹⁰Do this in order that people who are innocent will not die, and you will not be guilty for allowing them to be executed, in the land that Yahweh is giving to you.

¹¹But suppose someone hates his enemy and hides and waits for that person to come along the road. Then when he passes by, suddenly he attacks him and murders him. If the attacker flees to one of those cities to be protected there, ¹²the elders of the city where the murdered man lived must not protect the attacker. They must send

someone to the city to which the other man escaped, and bring him to to get revenge, so that he may execute that man. ¹³You must not pity those who murder other people! Instead, you must execute them, in order that the people in the land of Israel will not be punished for murdering innocent people, and in order that things will go well for you.

¹⁴When you are living in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, do not move the markers of your neighbors' property boundaries that were placed there long ago.

¹⁵If someone is accused of committing a crime, one person who says, 'I saw him do it' is not enough to find him guilty. There must be at least two people who say, 'We saw him do it.' If there is only one witness, the judge must not believe that what he says is true.

¹⁶Or suppose that someone tries to do wrong to another person by falsely accusing him. ¹⁷Then both of them must go to the place where the people worship, to talk to the priests and judges who are serving at that time.

¹⁸The judges must investigate the case carefully. If the judges determine that one of them has accused the other falsely, ¹⁹that person must be punished in the same way that the other one would have been punished if the judges had decided that he was guilty. By punishing such people, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you. ²⁰And when that person is punished, everyone will hear what has happened, and they will be afraid, and no one will dare to act that way anymore. ²¹You must not pity people who are punished like that. The rule should be that a person who has murdered someone else must be executed; one of a person's eyes must be gouged out if he has gouged out someone else's eye, one tooth of a person who has knocked out the tooth of another person must be knocked out; one hand of a person who has cut off the hand of another person must likewise be cut off; one foot of a person who has cut off the foot of another person must also be cut off.

Chapter 20

¹When your soldiers go to fight your enemies, and you see that they have many horses and chariots and that their army is much bigger than yours, do not be afraid of them, because Yahweh our God, who brought your ancestors safely out of Egypt, will be with you. ²When you are ready to start the battle, the high priest must stand in front of the troops. ³He must say to them, 'You Israelite men, listen to me! Today you are going to fight against your enemies. Do not be timid or afraid, ⁴because Yahweh our God will go with you. He will fight your enemies for you, and he will enable you to defeat them.'

⁵Then the army officers must say to the troops, 'If anyone among you has just built a new house and has not dedicated it to God, he should go home and dedicate the house. If he does not do that, if he dies in the battle, someone else will dedicate the house and live in it. ⁶If anyone among you has planted a vineyard and has not yet harvested any grapes from it, he should go home. If he stays here and dies in the battle, someone else will harvest the grapes and enjoy the wine made from them. ⁷If anyone among you has become engaged to marry a woman but has not married her yet, he should go home. If he stays here and dies in the battle, someone else will marry her.'

⁸Then the officers must also say, 'If anyone among you is afraid or timid, he should go home, in order that he does not cause his fellow soldiers to also stop being courageous.' ⁹When the officers have finished speaking to the troops, they must appoint commanders over them.

¹⁰When you go up to a city that is far away to attack it, first tell the people there that if they surrender, you will not attack them. ¹¹If they open the gates of the city and surrender, they will all become your slaves to work for you.

¹²But if they refuse to surrender peacefully and decide instead to fight against you, your troops must surround the city and break through the walls. ¹³Then, when Yahweh our God enables you to capture the city, you must kill all the men in the city. ¹⁴But you are allowed to take for yourselves the women, the children, the livestock, and everything else that you want to take from the city. You will be allowed to enjoy all the things that belonged to your

enemies, the things that Yahweh our God has given to you. ¹⁵You should do that in all the cities that are far from the land in which you will settle.

¹⁶But in the cities that are in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you forever, you must kill all the people and all the animals. ¹⁷You must get rid of them completely. Get rid of the Heth, the Amor the Canaan, the Periz, the Hiv, and the Jebus people groups; that is what Yahweh our God commanded you to do. ¹⁸If you do not do that, they will teach you to sin against Yahweh our God and do the disgusting things that they do when they worship their gods.

¹⁹When you surround a city for a long time, trying to capture it, do not cut down the fruit trees outside the city. You are allowed to eat the fruit from the trees, but do not destroy the trees, because they certainly are not your enemies. ²⁰You are permitted to cut down the other trees and use the wood to make ladders and towers to enable you to go over the walls and capture the city."

Chapter 21

¹"Suppose someone has been murdered in a field in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you do not know who killed that person. ²If that happens, your elders and judges must go out to where that person's corpse was found and measure the distance from there to each of the nearby towns. ³Then the elders in the closest town must select a young cow that has never been used for doing work. ⁴They must take it to a place near a stream where the ground has never been plowed or planted. There they must break its neck. ⁵The priests must go there also, because Yahweh our God has chosen them from the tribe of Levi to serve him and to be his representatives when they bless people. And he has also chosen them to settle disputes in which someone has been injured. ⁶The elders from the closest town must wash their hands over the young cow whose neck was broken, there in the valley, ⁷and they must say, 'We did not murder this person, and we did not see who did it. ⁸Yahweh, forgive us, your Israelite people whom you rescued from Egypt. Do not consider us to be guilty. Instead, forgive us.' ⁹By doing that, you will be doing what Yahweh considers to be right, and you will not be considered to be guilty for murdering that person.

¹⁰When you who are soldiers go to fight against your enemies, and Yahweh our God enables you to defeat them, and they become your prisoners, ¹¹one of you may see among them a beautiful woman that he likes, and he may want to marry her. ¹²He should take her to his home, and there she must shave all the hair off her head and cut her fingernails to signify that now she does not belong to her people group anymore, but now she is becoming an Israelite. ¹³She must take off the clothes that she was wearing when she was captured, and put on Israelite clothes. She must stay in that man's house and mourn for a month because of leaving her parents. After that, he will be allowed to marry her. ¹⁴Later, if he no longer is pleased with her, he will be permitted to allow her to leave him. But because she was shamed and was forced to sleep with him, he will not be allowed to treat her like a slave and sell her to anyone else.

¹⁵Suppose that a man has two wives, but he likes one of them and dislikes the other one. And suppose that they both give birth to sons, and that the oldest son is the child of the woman that he does not like. ¹⁶On the day when that man decides which of his possessions each son will obtain after he dies, he must not favor the son of the wife that he loves by giving him the larger share that should go to the firstborn son. ¹⁷He must give two-thirds of his possessions to the older son, the son of the wife whom he does not like. That son is his firstborn son, and he must be given the largest share.

¹⁸Suppose there is a boy who is very stubborn and is always rebelling against his parents, and who will not heed what they say to him. And suppose that they punish him but he still does not pay attention to what they tell him. ¹⁹If that happens, his parents must take him to the gate of the city where they live and have him stand in front of the elders of the city. ²⁰Then the parents must say to the elders of that city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and always rebelling against us. He will not pay attention to what we tell him. He eats too much, and he gets drunk.' ²¹Then all the elders of that city must execute him by throwing stones at him. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil

practice from among you. And everyone in Israel will hear about what happened and they will be afraid to do what he did.

²²If someone is executed for having committed a crime for which he deserves to die, and you hang his corpse on a post, ²³you must not allow his corpse to remain there all night. You must bury it on the day that he died, because if you keep the corpse on a post, God will curse the land. You must bury the corpse that day, in order that you do not defile the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

Chapter 22

¹If you see an Israelite's ox or sheep that has strayed away, do not act as though you did not see it. Take it back to its owner. ²But if the owner does not live near you, or if you do not know who he is, take the animal to your house. It can stay with you until the owner comes, searching for it. Then you must give the animal to him. ³You must do that same thing if you see a donkey, a piece of clothing, or anything else that someone has lost. Do not refuse to do what you should do. Do not pretend to know nothing about the matter.

⁴And if you see a fellow Israelite's donkey or cow that has fallen down on the road, do not act as though you did not see it. Help the owner to lift the animal up so that it can stand on its feet again.

⁵Women must not wear men's clothes, and men must not wear women's clothes. Yahweh our God hates people who do things like that.

⁶If you happen to find a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, and the mother bird is sitting in the nest on its eggs or with the baby birds, do not take the mother bird and kill it. ⁷You are permitted to take the baby birds, but you must allow the mother bird to fly away. Do this in order that things will go well for you and that you will live for a long time.

⁸If you build a new house, you must put a railing around the roof. In this way, you will not be guilty of having caused someone's death if a person falls from it and dies.

⁹Do not plant any crop in the area where your grapevines are growing. If you do, the priests in Yahweh's sanctuary will seize both the seed and the harvest of that vineyard.

¹⁰Do not hitch together an ox and a donkey for plowing your fields.

¹¹Do not wear clothing that is made by weaving together wool and linen.

¹²Twist threads together to make tassels and sew them on the four bottom corners of your cloak.

¹³Suppose a man marries a young woman and sleeps with her and later decides that he does not want her anymore, ¹⁴and suppose that he says false things about her, and claims that she was not a virgin when he married her. ¹⁵If that happens, the young woman's parents must take the sheet that was on the bed when the man and their daughter were married, which still has bloodstains on it, and show it to the elders of the city at the gate of the city. ¹⁶Then the father of the young woman must say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man to be his wife. But now he says that he does not want her anymore. ¹⁷And he has falsely said that she was not a virgin when he married her. But look! Here is what proves that my daughter was a virgin! Look at the bloodstains on the sheet where they slept the night that they were married!' And he will show the sheet to the elders. ¹⁸Then the elders of that city must take that man and whip him. ¹⁹They shall require that he pay a fine of one hundred pieces of silver and give the money to the father of the young woman, because the man has brought shame on an Israelite young woman. Also, that woman must continue to live with him; she is his wife. He is not allowed to divorce her during the rest of his life.

²⁰But if what the man said is true, and there is nothing to prove that she was a virgin when he married her, ²¹they must take that young woman to the door of her father's house. Then the men of that city must execute her by

throwing stones at her. They must do that because she has done something in Israel that is very disgraceful, by sleeping with some man while she was still living in her father's house. By executing her like that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you.

²²If a man is caught while he is sleeping with another man's wife, both of them must be executed. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from Israel.

²³Suppose in some town a man sees a young woman who is promised to be married to another man, and he is caught sleeping with her. ²⁴You must take both of them to the gate of that town, where the town leaders decide important matters. There you must execute them both by throwing stones at them. You must execute the young woman because she did not shout for help even though she was in the town. And the man must be executed because he slept with someone who was already promised to be married. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you

²⁵But suppose out in the open countryside a man meets a young woman who is engaged to be married, and he forces her to sleep with him. If that happens, only that man must be executed. ²⁶You must not punish the young woman, because she did not do anything for which she deserves to be executed. This case is like when one man attacks another man in the countryside and murders him, ²⁷because the man who forced her to sleep with him saw her when she was in the open countryside, and even though she called out for help, there was no one there who could rescue her.

²⁸If a man forces a young woman who is not engaged to be married to sleep with him, and if someone sees him while he is doing that, ²⁹that man must pay fifty pieces of silver to the young woman's father, and he must marry her, because he shamed her by forcing her to sleep with him. He is not allowed to divorce her during the rest of his life.

³⁰A man must not take what belongs to his father by sleeping with any of his father's wives.

Chapter 23

¹Any male person whose reproductive organs have been destroyed may not be included as one of Yahweh's people.

²No illegitimate person or descendant of an illegitimate person, extending to the tenth generation, shall be included as one of Yahweh's people.

³No one from the Ammon or Moab people groups shall be included as one of Yahweh's people, extending to the tenth generation. ⁴One reason for this is that their leaders refused to give your ancestors food and water when they were traveling from Egypt to Canaan. Another reason is that they paid Balaam son of Beor from the town of Pethor in Mesopotamia, to curse you Israelites. ⁵But Yahweh our God did not pay attention to Balaam; instead, he caused Balaam to bless your ancestors, because Yahweh loved them. ⁶As long as Israel is a nation, you must not do anything to cause things to go well for those two people groups to enable them to prosper.

⁷But do not despise anyone from the Edom people group, because they are descendants of your ancestor Isaac, just like you are. And do not despise people from Egypt, because they treated your ancestors well when they first lived in Egypt. ⁸The grandchildren of people from Edom and Egypt who live among you now may be included among Yahweh's people.

⁹When your soldiers are living in camp in time of war, they must avoid doing things that would make them unacceptable to God. ¹⁰If any soldier becomes unacceptable to God because semen comes out of his body during the night, the next morning he must go outside the camp and stay there during that day. ¹¹But in the evening of that day, he must bathe himself, and at sunset he will be allowed to come back into the camp.

¹²Your soldiers must have a toilet area outside the camp where you can go when you need to. ¹³When you go to fight against your enemies, carry a stick along with your weapons, in order that when you need to defecate, you can dig a hole with the stick, and then cover up the hole when you have finished defecating. ¹⁴You must keep the camp acceptable to Yahweh our God, because he is with you in your camp to protect you and to enable you to defeat your enemies. Do not do anything disgraceful that would cause Yahweh to turn away from you.

¹⁵If slaves who escape from their masters come to you and request you to protect them, do not send them back to their masters. ¹⁶Allow them to stay among you, in whatever town they choose, and do not mistreat them.

¹⁷Do not allow any Israelite man or woman to become prostitutes at the temple. ¹⁸Also, do not allow any people who earned money from being a prostitute to bring any of that money into the temple of Yahweh our God, even if they solemnly promised to pay that money to him. Yahweh hates those who are prostitutes.

¹⁹When you lend money or food or anything else to a fellow Israelite, do not charge them interest. ²⁰You are allowed to charge interest when you lend money to foreigners who live in your land, but not when you lend money to Israelites. Do this in order that Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

²¹When you solemnly promise to give something to Yahweh your God or to do something for him, do not delay in doing it. Yahweh expects you to do what you promised, and if you do not do it, you will be committing a sin. ²²But if you do not solemnly promise to do something, that is not sinful. ²³But if you voluntarily promise to do something, you must do it.

²⁴When you walk through someone else's vineyard, you are allowed to pick and eat as many grapes as you want, but you must not put any in a container and take them away. ²⁵When you walk along a path in someone else's field of grain, you are allowed to pluck some of the grain and eat it, but you must not cut any grain with a sickle and take it with you.

Chapter 24

¹Suppose a man marries a woman and later decides that he does not want her because there is something offensive, and he sends her away from his house. And suppose he writes a paper in which he says that he is divorcing her, and he gives the paper to her and sends her away from his house. ²Then suppose that she goes away. She is allowed to marry another man. ³Suppose that that man later also decides that he does not like her, and that he also writes a paper in which he says that he is divorcing her, and he sends her away from his house. Or, suppose that the second husband dies. ⁴If either of those things happen, her first husband must not marry her again. He must consider that she has become unacceptable to Yahweh. Yahweh would consider it to be disgusting if he married her again. You must not sin by doing that in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

⁵When a man has just become married, he must not be required to become a soldier in the army or be required to do any other work for the government. He must be exempt from such work for one year after being married. He should stay at home and make his wife happy for that year.

⁶Anyone who lends money to someone else is allowed to require that person to give him something to guarantee that he will pay back the money that he borrowed, but he must not take from him his millstone because that would be taking from the other person the millstone that his family needs to make flour for baking bread to stay alive.

⁷If someone kidnaps a fellow Israelite to make that person his slave or to sell him to become someone else's slave, you must execute the person who did that. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil from among you.

⁸If you are suffering from leprosy, be sure to do everything that the priests, who are from the tribe of Levi, tell you to do. Obey carefully the instructions that I have given to them. ⁹Do not forget what Yahweh our God did to Miriam, when she became a leper, as your ancestors were coming out of Egypt.

¹⁰When you lend something to someone, do not go into his house to take the cloak that he says that he will give you to guarantee that he will return what he has borrowed. ¹¹Stand outside his house, and the man to whom you are lending something will bring the cloak out to you. ¹²But if he is poor, do not keep that cloak overnight. ¹³When the sun sets, take the cloak back to him, in order that he may wear it while he sleeps. If you do that, he will ask God to bless you, and Yahweh our God will be pleased with you.

¹⁴Do not mistreat any servants whom you have hired who are poor and needy, whether they are Israelites or foreigners who are living in your town. ¹⁵Every day, before sunset, you must pay them the money that they have earned. They are poor and they need to get their pay. If you do not pay them right away, they will cry out against you to Yahweh, and he will punish you for having sinned like that.

¹⁶Parents must not be executed for crimes that their children have committed, and children must not be executed for crimes that their parents have committed. People should be executed only for the crimes that they themselves have committed.

¹⁷You must do for foreigners who live among you and for orphans the things that the laws state that must be done for them. And if you lend something to a widow, do not take her coat from her as a guarantee that she will return it. ¹⁸Do not forget that you had great troubles when you were slaves in Egypt, and that Yahweh our God rescued you from there. That is why I am commanding you to help others who have troubles.

¹⁹When you harvest your crops, if you have forgotten that you left one bundle in the field, do not go back to get it. Leave it there for foreigners, orphans, and widows. If you do that, Yahweh will bless you in everything that you do.

²⁰And when you have harvested all your olives from the trees once, do not go back to pick the ones that are still on the trees. ²¹Similarly, when you pick the grapes in your vineyard, do not go back a second time to try to find more. Leave them for the foreigners, orphans, and widows among you. ²²Do not forget that Yahweh acted kindly toward you when you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I am commanding you to be kind to those who are needy."

Chapter 25

¹"If two Israelites have a dispute and they go to a court, the judge will probably decide that one is innocent and that the other one is guilty. ²If the judge says that the guilty person must be punished, he shall command him to lie with his face on the ground and be whipped. The number of times he is struck with a whip will depend on what kind of crime he committed. ³It is permitted that he be struck as many as forty times, but no more than that. If he is struck more than forty times, he would be humiliated publicly.

⁴When your ox is walking on the grain to separate it from the chaff, do not prevent it from eating some of grain.

⁵If two brothers live on the same property, and one of them who has no son dies, the man's widow should not marry someone who is not a member of his family. The dead man's brother must marry her and sleep with her. It is his duty to do that. ⁶If she later gives birth to a son, that son is to be considered the son of the man who died, in order that the dead man's name will not disappear from Israel.

⁷But if the dead man's brother does not want to marry that woman, she must stand at the city gate. She must say to the city leaders, 'My husband's brother refuses to marry me in order that I may give birth to a son who will prevent the dead man's name from disappearing in Israel.' ⁸Then the elders must summon that man and talk to him. Perhaps he will still refuse to marry that widow. ⁹In that case, she must go up to him while the elders are watching, and take off one of his sandals to symbolize that he would not receive any of her property, spit in his face, and say to him, 'This is what happens to the man who refuses to do what is needed to allow his dead brother to have a son in order that our family name does not disappear.' ¹⁰After that happens, that man's family will be known as 'the family of the man whose sandal was pulled off.'

¹¹When two men are fighting with each other, and the one man's wife comes up to help her husband by grabbing hold of the other man's private parts, ¹²do not act mercifully toward her; cut off her hand.

¹³⁻¹⁴When you are buying or selling things, do not try to cheat people by having two kinds of weights, one which you use when you buy something and one which you use when you sell something, or two kinds of measuring baskets, one which you use when you buy something and one which you use when you sell something. ¹⁵Always use correct weights and correct measuring baskets, in order that Yahweh our God will allow you to live a long time in the land that he is giving to you. ¹⁶Yahweh hates all those who act dishonestly, and he will punish them.

¹⁷Continue to remember what the Amalek people group did to your ancestors when they were coming out of Egypt. ¹⁸They attacked your ancestors as they were traveling, when they were weak and exhausted. Those people were not afraid of God at all, so they attacked your ancestors from the rear and killed all those who were unable to walk as fast as the others. ¹⁹Therefore, when Yahweh our God has given you the land that he promised to give you, and when he has enabled you to rest from fighting all your enemies around you, kill all the Amalek people group, with the result that no one will remember them anymore. Do not forget to do this!

Chapter 26

¹After you occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you have settled there, ²each of you must take some of the first crops that you harvest, put it in a basket, and take it to the place that Yahweh will have chosen for you to worship there. ³Go to the high priest who is serving at that time and say to him, 'By giving you this first part of my harvest today, I am declaring to Yahweh our God that I have picked it in the land that he solemnly promised to our ancestors to give to us.' ⁴Then the priest must take the basket of food from your hand and put it on the altar where sacrifices are offered to Yahweh our God. ⁵Then in Yahweh's presence you must say this: 'My ancestor Jacob was a man from Aram and powerful nation. He took his family to Egypt. They were a small group when they went there, but they lived there and their descendants became a very large and powerful nation. ⁶Then the people of Egypt acted very harshly toward them, and they forced them to become their slaves and to work very hard. ⁷Then our ancestors cried out to you, Yahweh our God, and you heard them. You saw that they were suffering, and that they were forced to work very hard, and were being oppressed. ⁸Then by your great power and by performing many kinds of miracles, and other terrifying things, you brought them out of Egypt. ⁹You brought us to this land and gave it to us, a land that is very fertile. ¹⁰So now, Yahweh, I have brought to you the first part of the harvest from the land that I received.' Then you must set the basket down in Yahweh's presence and worship him there. ¹¹And you must celebrate by eating a meal together to thank Yahweh our God for all the good things that he has given to you and to your family. And you must invite the descendants of Levi and the foreigners who are living among you to also rejoice and eat with you.

¹²Every third year, you must bring to the descendants of Levi and to the foreigners who are living among you and the orphans and the widows a tithe of your crops, in order that in every town they will have plenty to eat. ¹³Then you must say to Yahweh, 'I have brought to you, from my house, all of the tenth from my harvest this year, the tenth that I have set aside for you. I am giving it to the descendants of Levi, to the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, as you commanded us to do. I have not disobeyed any of your commands about the tenth portion, and I have not forgotten any of your commands about it. ¹⁴I declare that I have not eaten any food from the tenth portion while I was mourning for someone who died. And I have not taken any of it out of my house while I was in any condition unacceptable to you; I have not offered any of it to spirits of dead people. Yahweh, I have obeyed you and done everything that you have commanded us concerning the tenth portion. ¹⁵So please look down from your holy place in heaven, and bless us, your Israelite people. Also bless this very fertile land which you have given to us, which is what you promised our ancestors that you would do.'

¹⁶Today Yahweh our God is commanding you to obey all these rules and decrees. So obey them faithfully, with all your inner being. ¹⁷Today you have declared that he is your God, and that you will conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and that you will obey all his commands and rules and decrees, and that you will do all that he tells you to do. ¹⁸And today Yahweh has declared that you are his people, which is what he promised that you would be, and he commands you to obey all his commands. ¹⁹If you do that, he will cause you to become greater than any other

nation that he has established, and he will enable you to praise him and honor him. You are a special people to Yahweh, set apart and holy to him, just as he promised.”

Chapter 27

¹Moses, along with the other Israelite leaders, said this to the people: “Obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today. ²Soon you will cross the Jordan River and enter the land that Yahweh, your God, promised to give to you. There, set up some large stones and cover them with plaster. ³Write on those stones all these laws and teachings, when you enter that very fertile land that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, promised to give to you. ⁴When you have crossed the Jordan River, set up some large stones on Mount Ebal, just as I told you, and cover them with plaster. ⁵And build a stone altar there to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, but do not do any work on those stones with iron tools. ⁶The altar that you make to burn sacrifices to Yahweh our God must be made with uncut stones. ⁷And there you must sacrifice offerings to restore fellowship with Yahweh, and you must eat your share of those offerings and rejoice in the presence of Yahweh. ⁸And, when you write these laws on those stones, you must write them very clearly.”

⁹Then Moses, along with the priests, said to all the Israelite people, “You Israelite people, be quiet and listen to what I am saying. Today you have become the people who belong to Yahweh, our God. ¹⁰So you must do what he tells you, and obey all the rules and regulations that I am giving to you today.”

¹¹On that same day Moses said to the Israelite people, ¹²“After you have crossed over the Jordan River, the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin must stand on Mount Gerizim and request Yahweh to bless the people. ¹³And the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali must stand on Mount Ebal and listen to the things that Yahweh will do when he curses the people.

¹⁴The descendants of Levi must shout these words loudly:

¹⁵Yahweh will curse anyone who carves a figure from wood or stone or casts a figure from metal, and secretly sets it up and worships it.

Yahweh considers that those things are detestable.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

¹⁶Yahweh will curse anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

¹⁷Yahweh will curse anyone who removes someone else’s markers of property boundaries.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

¹⁸Yahweh will curse anyone who leads a blind person to go in the wrong direction.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

¹⁹Yahweh will curse anyone who deprives foreigners or orphans or widow of the things that the laws state must be done for them.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

²⁰Yahweh will curse anyone who shows no respect for his father

by sleeping with any of his father’s wives.’

And all the people must reply, ‘Amen.’

²¹Yahweh will curse anyone who sleeps with any animal.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²²Yahweh will curse anyone who sleeps with his sister or with his half-sister.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²³Yahweh will curse anyone who sleeps with his mother-in-law.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁴Yahweh will curse anyone who secretly murders someone else.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁵Yahweh will curse anyone who, because someone else has given him a bribe, murders someone who is innocent.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁶Yahweh will curse anyone who by disobeying these laws refuses to declare that those laws are good.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'"

Chapter 28

¹"If you do what Yahweh our God tells you to do and faithfully obey everything that I am today commanding you to do, he will cause you to become greater than any other nation on the earth. ²If you obey Yahweh, all these blessings will come to you.

³He will bless everything that you do when you are in the cities

and he will bless every thing that you do when you are working in the fields.

⁴He will bless you by giving you many children and by giving you abundant crops, and plenty of cattle and sheep.

⁵He will bless you by giving you plenty of grain to make bread.

⁶He will bless you everywhere—when you go out of your houses and when you come into your houses.

⁷Yahweh will enable you to defeat the armies of your enemies;

they will attack you from one direction, but they will run away from you in seven directions.

⁸Yahweh will bless you by filling your barns with grain, and he will bless all the work that you do;

he will bless you in the land that he is giving to you.

⁹If you obey all the commandments that Yahweh our God has given to you and if you live your lives by following his commandments, he will make you his own, his holy people, which is just as he promised.

¹⁰Then all the people groups on the earth will realize that you belong to Yahweh, and they will be afraid of you.

¹¹And Yahweh will cause you to prosper very much. He will give you many children, many cattle, and abundant crops in the land that he solemnly promised to our ancestors that he would give to you.

¹²At the time that rain is needed, Yahweh will send it from where he stores it in the sky, and he will bless all your work, with the result that you will be able to lend money to many other nations, but you will not need to borrow money from them.

¹³If you faithfully obey all of the commands of Yahweh our God that I am giving you today, Yahweh will cause your nation to be superior to other nations, not inferior to them; you will always be prosperous and you will never be needy.

¹⁴Yahweh will do all these things for you if you do not stop obeying what I am commanding you today, and if you never worship other gods.

¹⁵But if you do not do what Yahweh our God is telling you to do, and if you do not faithfully obey all his rules and regulations that I am giving to you today, he will bring these curses upon you and he will let them have their full force against you.

¹⁶He will curse you when you are in the cities

and he will curse you when you are working in the fields.

¹⁷He will curse you by not giving you much grain to make bread.

¹⁸He will curse you by giving you only a few children, by giving you poor crops, and by not giving you many cattle and sheep.

¹⁹He will curse you everywhere—when you go out of your houses and when you come into your houses.

²⁰If you do evil things and reject Yahweh,

he will curse you by causing you to be confused, and to be frustrated in all that you do,
until your enemies quickly and completely destroy you.

²¹Yahweh will send terrible diseases on you,

until not one of you remains alive in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

²²Yahweh will afflict you with diseases that shrivel your bodies, with fever, with inflammation.

It will be extremely hot, and it will not rain.

There will be scorching winds, and he will cause your crops to rot.

All these things will strike you until you die.

²³No rain will fall from the sky, with the result that the ground will be as hard as iron.

²⁴Instead of sending rain, Yahweh will send strong winds to blow sand and dust over your land, until your land is ruined.

²⁵Yahweh will enable your enemies to defeat you;

your soldiers will attack them from one direction, but will run away from them in seven directions,
and when the people of other nations see what is happening to you, they will say that it is horrible.

²⁶You will die, and birds and wild animals will come and eat your corpses,

and there will not be anyone to scare them away.

²⁷Yahweh will cause you to have boils on your skin, like he caused the people of Egypt to have many years ago.

He will cause you to have tumors, open sores, and your skin will itch, but there will be nothing that will cure those diseases.

²⁸Yahweh will cause some of you to become insane; he will cause some of you to become blind, and he will cause some of your minds to become confused.

²⁹Because you will not be able to see where you are going, at midday you will grope around with your hands, like people do in the darkness.

You will not prosper in anything that you do.

You will continually be oppressed and robbed, and there will not be anyone to help you.

³⁰Some of you men will be engaged to marry a young woman, but someone else will forcibly sleep with her.

You will build houses, but you will never live in them.

You will plant grapevines, but you will not eat the grapes; someone else will eat them.

³¹Your enemies will butcher your cattle while you watch them, and you will not get any of the meat to eat.

They will drag away your donkeys while you watch them do it, and they will not give them back to you.

They will take away your sheep; and there will not be anyone to help you rescue them.

³²While you watch, your sons and daughters will be given to foreigners to become their slaves. Every day you will watch for your children to return, but you will watch in vain.

³³People from a foreign nation will take all the crops that you worked hard to produce, and they will constantly treat you harshly and cruelly.

³⁴The result will be that all these terrible things that you see will cause you to become insane.

³⁵Yahweh will cause your legs to be covered with painful boils that cannot be healed, and you will have boils from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head.

³⁶Yahweh will cause your king and the rest of you to be taken to another country, to a place in which you and your ancestors have never lived,

and there you will worship and serve gods that are made of wood or stone.

³⁷When the people groups in nearby countries see what has happened to you, they will be shocked; they will taunt you and make fun of you in every place where Yahweh drives you.

³⁸You will plant plenty of seeds in your fields, but you will reap only a small harvest, because locusts will eat the crops.

³⁹You will plant grapevines and take care of them, but you will not pick any grapes to make wine, because worms will eat the vines.

⁴⁰Olive trees will grow everywhere in your land, but you will not get any olive oil to rub on your skin because the olives will drop on the ground before they are ripe.

⁴¹You will have sons and daughters, but they will not stay with you, because they will be captured and taken away.

⁴²Swarms of locusts will eat your crops and the leaves of all your trees.

⁴³Foreigners who live in your land will become more and more powerful, and you will become less and less powerful.

⁴⁴They will have money to lend to you, but you will not have any money to lend to them.

They will be superior to you, and you will be inferior to them.

⁴⁵All these disasters will happen to you and continue to happen to you until you are destroyed, if you do not do what Yahweh your God told you to do, and do not obey all the rules and regulations that he gave to you.

⁴⁶These disasters will solemnly warn you and your descendants forever what happens to groups who disobey Yahweh.

⁴⁷Because Yahweh blessed you abundantly in many ways, you should have served him very joyfully, but you did not do that.

⁴⁸Therefore, you will work for the enemies whom Yahweh will send to attack you. You will be hungry and thirsty; you will not have clothes to wear; and you will lack everything else that you need. And Yahweh will cause you to become slaves and work hard until he destroys you.

⁴⁹Yahweh will bring against you an army from very far away, soldiers who speak a language that you do not understand. They will swoop down on you quickly like an eagle. ⁵⁰They will be fierce looking. They will not act mercifully toward anyone, not even young children and old people. ⁵¹They will kill and eat your livestock, and they will eat your crops, and you will starve. They will not leave for you any grain or wine or olive oil or cattle or sheep; and you will all die from hunger. ⁵²Your enemies will surround your towns throughout the land that Yahweh your God is about to give to you, and they will break down the high and strong walls around your towns, walls which you trusted would protect you.

⁵³When your enemies are surrounding your towns, you will be extremely hungry, with the result that you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters that Yahweh your God has given to you. ⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵When your enemies have surrounded your towns, even the most gentle and sensitive men among you will want food very desperately, with the result that they will kill their own children and eat their flesh, because they will not have anything else to eat. They will not even share any of it with their brothers or wives whom they love very much or with any of their other children who are still alive. ⁵⁶⁻⁵⁷Even the most gentle and kind women among you, who are very rich with the result that they have never been forced to walk anywhere, will do the same thing. When your enemies have surrounded your towns, those women will be extremely hungry, with the result that after they give birth to a child, they will secretly kill the baby and eat its flesh and also eat the afterbirth. And they will not share any of it with their husbands whom they love very much or with any of their other children.

⁵⁸If you do not faithfully obey all of the laws that I am writing, and if you do not have the utmost respect for Yahweh our glorious God, ⁵⁹he will punish you by sending on you and on your descendants great afflictions and plagues which will last for many years. ⁶⁰He will bring on you the plagues that he sent on the people of Egypt, and you will never be healed. ⁶¹He will also send on you many other sicknesses and diseases that I have not talked about in these laws, until you all will die. ⁶²You became as numerous as the stars in the sky, but only a few of you will remain alive, if you do not obey Yahweh your God. ⁶³Yahweh was very happy to do good things for you and to cause you to become very numerous, but now he will be happy to ruin you and get rid of you. Those of you who do not die from these plagues will be snatched away from the land that you will soon be entering to possess.

⁶⁴Yahweh will scatter you among many people groups, all over the earth, and in those places you will worship other gods that are made of wood or stone, gods which you and your ancestors have never known. ⁶⁵In those areas you will not have any peace. You will feel hopeless and be discouraged. ⁶⁶You will always be afraid that your enemies will kill you. You will be very fearful, all day and all night. ⁶⁷Because you will be very fearful and because you will very distressed because of the terrible things that you see, each morning you will say 'I wish it were

evening already!' and each evening you will say 'I wish it were morning already!' ⁶⁸Yahweh will send some of you back to Egypt in ships, even though he promised that you would never be forced to go there again. There in Egypt you will try to sell yourselves to become slaves of your enemies in order to have food to eat, but no one will buy you."

Chapter 29

¹These are the covenantal commands of Yahweh that the Israelites were required to obey. When they were in the region of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River, Moses commanded them to keep these regulations. These regulations became part of the covenant that Yahweh had made with them at Mount Sinai.

²Moses summoned all the Israelite people and said to them, "You saw for yourselves what Yahweh did to the king of Egypt and to his officials and to his entire country. ³You saw all the plagues that Yahweh sent on them, and all the various miracles that he performed. ⁴But to this day, Yahweh has not enabled you to understand the meaning of all that you have seen and heard. ⁵For forty years Yahweh has led you while you traveled through the desert. During that time, your clothes and your sandals have not worn out. ⁶You did not have bread to eat or wine or other fermented drinks to drink, but Yahweh took care of you, in order that you would know that he is your God.

⁷And when we came to this place, Sihon, the king who ruled in the city of Heshbon, and Og, the king who ruled the region of Bashan, came out with their armies to attack us, but we defeated them. ⁸We took their land and divided it among the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh.

⁹So obey faithfully all of this covenant, in order that you will prosper in everything that you do. ¹⁰Today all of us are standing in the presence of Yahweh our God—I, the leaders of all your tribes, your elders, your officials, all you Israelite men, ¹¹your wives, your children, and the foreigners who live among us and cut wood for us and carry water for us. ¹²You are all here today to agree to accept this covenant with Yahweh, and to bind yourselves to it. ¹³He is making this agreement with you in order to make sure that you are his people, and that he is your God. This is what he promised to do for you, and what he solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that he would do. ¹⁴This covenant is not only with you. ¹⁵God is making this agreement with us who are here today and also with our descendants who are not yet born.

¹⁶You remember the things that our ancestors suffered in Egypt, and how they traveled through the land that belonged to other nations after they came out of Egypt. ¹⁷In those countries they saw those disgusting idols made of wood and stone and decorated with silver and gold. ¹⁸So be sure that no man or woman or family or tribe that is here today turns away from Yahweh our God, to worship any of the gods of those people groups. If you do that, you will bring disaster on yourselves.

¹⁹Be sure that no one here today who hears the words of this covenant says to himself, 'Everything will go well with me, even if I stubbornly do what I want to.' If you do that, the result will be that Yahweh will eventually destroy all of you, both good people and evil people. ²⁰Yahweh will not forgive anyone who is stubborn like that. Instead, he will be extremely angry with that person, and all the curses that I have told you about will happen to that person, until Yahweh destroys that person and his family forever. ²¹From all the tribes of Israel, Yahweh will choose that individual to suffer all the disasters that I have listed in the covenant—all the bad things that will happen to anyone whom Yahweh curses for disobeying the laws that I have written in this scroll.

²²In future years, your descendants and people from other countries will see the disasters and the illnesses that Yahweh has caused to happen to you. ²³They will see that all your land has been ruined by burning sulfur and salt. Nothing will have been planted. Not even weeds will be there. Your land will resemble the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of Admah and Zeboyim, which Yahweh destroyed when he was very angry with those people. ²⁴And the people from those other nations will ask, 'Why did Yahweh do this to this land? Why was he so angry with the people who lived here?'

²⁵Then other people will reply, 'It is because they refused to obey the covenant that they had made with Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, when he brought them out of Egypt. ²⁶Instead, they worshiped other gods that they had never worshiped before, gods that Yahweh had not told them to worship. ²⁷So Yahweh became very angry with the people of this land, and he has caused to happen to them all the disasters that their leader warned them about. ²⁸Yahweh became extremely angry with them and took them out of their land, and threw them into another land, and they are still there.'

²⁹There are some things that Yahweh our God has kept secret, but he has revealed his law to us, and he expects us and our descendants to obey it forever.

Chapter 30

¹I have now told you about the ways that Yahweh our God will bless you if you obey him and the ways that he will curse you if you disobey him. But if you choose not to obey his laws, some day you will be living in the countries to which he will have scattered you, and you will remember what I told you. ²Then, if you and your children begin to worship Yahweh our God and faithfully obey all that I have today commanded you to do, ³he will again act mercifully toward you. He will bring you back from the nations to which he scattered you, and he will cause you to be prosperous again. ⁴Even if you have been scattered to the most distant places on the earth, Yahweh our God will gather you from there and bring you back to your land. ⁵He will enable you to possess again the land where your ancestors lived. And he will cause you to be more prosperous and more numerous than you are now. ⁶Yahweh our God will change your inner beings, with the result that you will love him with all that you desire and with all that you feel. And then you will continue to live in that land. ⁷Yahweh our God will send all the disasters that I have told you about on your enemies and on those who oppressed you. ⁸As you did before, you will do what Yahweh wants you to do, and you will obey all the commands that I have given to you today. ⁹Yahweh our God will cause you to be very prosperous in all that you do. You will have many children and many cattle, and you will produce abundant crops. He will again be happy to enable you to prosper, just like he was happy to enable your ancestors to prosper. ¹⁰But he will do those things only if you do what he has told you to do, and only if you obey all his rules and regulations that I have written about in this book, and only if you turn to Yahweh with all that you desire and with all that you feel.

¹¹The commands that I am giving to you today are not very difficult for you to obey, and they are not difficult to know. ¹²They are not hidden in heaven. You do not need to say, 'Who can go up to heaven for us to bring them down here to us so we can learn them?' ¹³And they are not on the other side of the sea. You do not need to say, 'Who will cross the sea for us and bring them back to us, so we can learn them?' ¹⁴No, his commands are here with you. You know them, and you can say them again and again. So you can easily obey them.

¹⁵So listen! Today I am allowing you to choose between doing what is evil and doing what is good, between what will enable you to live for a long time and what will cause you to die while you are still young. ¹⁶I say again, if you obey the decrees of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you today, and if you love him and conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and if you obey all his rules and regulations, you will prosper and become very numerous, and Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

¹⁷But if you stop worshipping Yahweh, and if you refuse to obey what he says, and if you allow others to persuade you to worship other gods, ¹⁸I am warning you today that you will soon die. Your people will not live for very long in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to enter and possess.

¹⁹I am requesting everyone in heaven and on the earth to testify to you, that today I am allowing you to choose whether you want to live for a long time or to soon die, whether you want Yahweh to bless you or to curse you. So choose to live. ²⁰Decide to love Yahweh our God and to obey him. If you do that, you and your descendants will live for a long time in the land that Yahweh solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would give to them."

Chapter 31

¹When Moses finished saying all that to the Israelite people, ²"I am 120 years old. I am no longer able to go everywhere that you need to go, so I cannot be your leader any longer. Furthermore, Yahweh has told me that I will not cross the Jordan River. ³But Yahweh our God will go ahead of you. He will enable you to destroy the nations that are living there, in order that you can occupy their land. Joshua will be your leader, which is what Yahweh has already told me. ⁴Yahweh will do to those nations what he did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amor people group when he destroyed their armies and their people groups. ⁵Yahweh will enable you to conquer those people groups, but you must kill all of those people, which is what I have commanded you to do. ⁶Be brave and confident. Do not be afraid of those people. Do not forget that it is Yahweh our God who will go with you. He will always help you and never abandon you."

⁷Then Moses called Joshua to his side and said to him, "Be brave and confident. You are the one who will lead these people into the land that Yahweh promised to our ancestors that he would give to them, and you will enable them to occupy it. ⁸It is Yahweh who will go ahead of you. He will be with you. He will always help you. He will never abandon you. So do not be afraid or dismayed."

⁹Moses wrote down all these laws and gave the scroll to the priests, who carried the sacred chest. He also gave the scroll to all the Israelite elders. ¹⁰Moses told them, "At the end of every seven years, at the time that all debts are canceled, read this to the people during the Festival of Shelters. ¹¹Read it to all the Israelite people when they gather at the place that Yahweh chooses for them to worship him. ¹²Gather together everyone—men, women, children, even the foreigners who are living in your towns—in order that they may hear these laws and learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh our God, and to faithfully obey everything that is written in these laws. ¹³If they do that, your descendants, who have never known these laws, will hear them and will also learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh our God, during all the years that they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy."

¹⁴Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Listen carefully. You will soon die. Summon Joshua, and you will go to the sacred tent with him, in order that I may appoint him to be the new leader." So Joshua and Moses went to the sacred tent.

¹⁵There Yahweh appeared to them in a pillar of cloud, and that cloud was over the entrance to the tent. ¹⁶Yahweh said to Moses, "You will soon die. Then these people will become unfaithful to me. They will stop obeying the covenant that I made with them. They will begin to worship the foreign gods that are worshiped by the people of the land that they will enter. ¹⁷When that happens, I will become very angry with them. I will abandon them and refuse to help them any longer. Many bad things will happen to them, and they will be destroyed. Then they will say among themselves, 'These things are happening to us because our God is no longer with us.' ¹⁸And because of all the evil things that they will have done, and especially because they will have started to worship other gods, I will refuse to help them.

¹⁹So I am going to give you, Moses, a song. Write it on a scroll and teach it to the Israelite people and make them memorize it. It will be like a witness that accuses them. ²⁰I am about to take them into a very fertile land, a land that I solemnly promised their ancestors that I would give to them. There they will have plenty to eat, with the result that their stomachs will always be full and they will become fat. But then they will turn to other gods and start to worship them, and they will despise me and break the covenant that I have made with them. ²¹And many terrible disasters will happen to them. After that happens, their descendants will remember this song, and it will be like a witness that says, 'Now you know why Yahweh punished your ancestors.' I will soon take them into the land that I solemnly promised that I would give to them; but even now, before I do that, I know what they are thinking that they will do when they are living there." ²²So on the very day that Yahweh gave Moses that song, Moses also taught it to the Israelite people.

²³Then Yahweh appointed Joshua as leader and said to him, "Be brave and confident, because you will lead the Israelite people into the land that I solemnly promised that I would give to them. And I will be with you."

²⁴Moses finished writing all the law onto a scroll. ²⁵Then he told the descendants of Levi, who were carrying the Sacred Chest that contained the Ten Commandments, ²⁶“Take this scroll on which these laws are written, and place it beside the Sacred Chest that contains the covenant that Yahweh our God made with you, in order that it may remain there to testify about what Yahweh will do to the people if they disobey him. ²⁷I say this because I know that these people are very stubborn. They have rebelled against Yahweh all during the time that I have been with them, and they will rebel much more after I die! ²⁸So gather all the elders of the tribes and your officials, in order that I can teach them the words of this song, and so that I can request all those who are in heaven and on the earth to be witnesses to testify against these people. ²⁹I say this, because I know that after I die, the people will become very wicked. They will stop doing everything that I have commanded them to do. And in the future, because of all the evil things that they will do, they will cause Yahweh to become angry with them. Then he will cause them to experience disasters.”

³⁰Then, while all the Israelite people listened, Moses sang this entire song to them:

Chapter 32

¹“Listen to me, all you who are in the heavens,
and all you who are on the earth, listen to what I say.

²I wish that my song may help you like the rain helps you,
or like the dew on the ground in the morning,
or like a gentle rain on the young plants,
like showers of rain on the grass.

³I will praise Yahweh.
And all you people should praise how great our God is.

⁴He is like a rock on top of which we are protected;
everything that he does is perfect and completely just.
He always does what he says that he will do;
he never does anything that is wrong.

⁵But you Israelite people have been very unfaithful to him;
because of your sins, you no longer deserve to be his children.
You are extremely wicked and deceitful.

⁶You foolish and senseless people,
is this the way that you should repay Yahweh for all that he has done for you?
He is your father; he created you;
he caused you to become a nation.

⁷Think about what happened long ago;
consider what happened to your ancestors.

Ask your parents, and they will inform you;
ask the older people, and they will tell you.

⁸When God, who is greater than any other god, long ago divided the people into groups,
he assigned to the nations their land.

He determined where each people group should live
and limited to each people group their own gods.

⁹But Yahweh decided that we would be his people;
he chose us, the descendants of Jacob, to belong to him.

¹⁰He saw our ancestors when they were in a desert,
wandering in a land that was desolate.

He protected them and took care of them,
as every person takes good care of his own eyes.

¹¹Yahweh protected his people just like an eagle encourages its babies to fly
and flutters over them,
spreading its wings and catching them if they start to fall.

¹²Yahweh was the only one who led them;
no other foreign god helped them.

¹³After they entered the land that Yahweh promised to give to them,
Yahweh enabled them to rule the hill country;
they ate the crops that grew in the fields.
They found honey in the rocks,
and their olive trees grew even in stony ground.

¹⁴The cows gave them plenty of curds; the goats gave them plenty of milk,
they had well fed sheep and cattle,
they had very good wheat,
and they made delicious wine from their grapes.

¹⁵The Israelite people became rich and prosperous,
but then they rebelled against God;
they abandoned him, the one who created them,
the one who powerfully saves them.

¹⁶He abandoned them because they started to worship other gods.

Because of their worshiping disgusting idols,
he became angry.

¹⁷They offered sacrifices to gods who were really demons,
gods that their ancestors had never known;
they offered sacrifices to gods that they had recently found out about,
gods whom your ancestors had never had any respect for.

¹⁸They forgot the true God, the one who protects them,
the one who created them and caused them to live.

¹⁹When Yahweh saw that they had abandoned him, he became angry,
so he rejected the Israelite people who were like his sons and daughters.

²⁰He said, 'They are very wicked people,
very unfaithful;
so I will no longer help them,
and then I will watch and see what happens to them.

²¹Because they now are worshiping idols, which are not really gods,
they have caused me to be like a jealous husband because I want them to worship only me.
So now, in order to cause them to become angry,
I will now send to attack them an army of a nation of worthless and foolish people.

²²I will be very angry, and I will destroy them
like a fire that will burn all the way down to the place where dead people are;
that fire will destroy the earth and everything that grows on it,
and it will even burn what is down under the mountains.

²³I will pile up on them many disasters;
they will feel as though I am shooting all my arrows on them.

²⁴They will die because of being hungry and because of having hot fevers
and because of terrible diseases;
I will send wild animals to attack them,
and poisonous snakes to bite them.

²⁵Outside their houses, their enemies will kill them with swords,
and in their homes, their enemies will cause them to be terrified.
Their enemies will kill young men and young women,

and they will kill infants and old people with gray hair.

²⁶I wanted only to scatter them to distant countries
in order that no one would ever remember them.

²⁷But if I did that, their enemies would wrongly boast
that they were the ones who had gotten rid of my people;
they would say, "We are the ones who defeated them;
it was not Yahweh who has done all these things."

²⁸You Israelites are a nation of people who do not have any sense.
None of you are wise.

²⁹If you were wise, you would understand why you would be punished;
you would have realized what was going to happen to you.

³⁰You would have realized why a thousand of your soldiers would be defeated by only one of the enemy soldiers,
and why two of your enemies would chase away ten thousand Israelite soldiers.

You would realize that this would happen only if God, the one who always defended you, had put you in the hands
of your enemies,

that Yahweh had abandoned you.

³¹Your enemies know that their gods are not powerful like Yahweh, our God,
so their gods could not have defeated us Israelites.

³²Your enemies are like grapevines planted near the ruins of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah;
the grapes from those vines are bitter and poisonous.

³³The wine from those grapes is like the poison of snakes.

³⁴Yahweh says, 'I know what I have planned to do to the Israelite people and to their enemies,
and I have locked up those plans as someone would lock up his valuable possessions.

³⁵I am the one who will get revenge and pay those enemies back for what they have done to my people,
at the right time for them to be punished;
they will soon experience disasters,
and I will punish them quickly.'

³⁶But Yahweh will say that you who are truly his people are innocent,
and he will act mercifully toward you who serve him,
when he sees that you are helpless,
and that there are very few of you, slaves or free people, who are still alive.

³⁷Then Yahweh will ask you, 'Where are the gods
that you thought would protect you?

³⁸You gave to those gods the best parts of the animals that you sacrificed,
and you poured out wine for them to drink.
So they should rise and help you;
they should be the ones who will protect you!

³⁹But now you will realize that I, only I, am God;
there is no other god who is a real god.
I am the one who can kill people and who can cause people to live;
I can wound people, and I can heal people,
and there is no one who can prevent me from doing those things.

⁴⁰I raise my hand toward heaven and solemnly declare
that just as sure as I live forever, I will act.

⁴¹When I sharpen my sword
and prepare to punish people,
I will get revenge on my enemies,
and I will pay back those who hate me.

⁴²I will kill all of my enemies with a sword;
it will be as though I had arrows that were covered with their blood.
I will kill all those whom I capture
and cut off their heads.'

⁴³You people of all nations, you should praise Yahweh's people,
because Yahweh gets revenge on those who kill the people who serve him,
and he cleanses his people's land
which has become defiled because of their sins."

⁴⁴Joshua and Moses sang that song while the Israelite people were listening. ⁴⁵Then they finished singing to them this song. ⁴⁶Moses said, "Never forget all these commands that I have been giving you today. Teach these laws to your children, in order that they will faithfully obey all of them. ⁴⁷These instructions are very important. If you obey them, you will live a long time in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy."

⁴⁸On that same day, Yahweh said to Moses, ⁴⁹"Go to the Abarim mountain range here in the region of Moab, across from Jericho. Climb Mount Nebo and look toward the west to see Canaan, the land that I am about to give to the Israelite people. ⁵⁰You will die on that mountain, like your older brother Aaron died on Mount Hor. ⁵¹You will die because both of you disobeyed me in the presence of the Israelite people, when you all were at the springs of Meribah near Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You did not honor and respect me in the presence of the Israelite

people in the way that I deserve because I am God. ⁵²When you are on that mountain where I told you to go, you will see in the distance in front of you the land that I am about to give to the Israelite people, but you will not enter it."

Chapter 33

¹Before God's prophet Moses died, he asked God to bless the Israelite people. ²This is what he said:

"Yahweh came and spoke to us at Mount Sinai;

he came like the sun rises in the region of Edom

and like his light shone on us when we were in the desert near Mount Paran after we left Mount Sinai.

He came with ten thousand angels,

and there was a flaming fire at his right side.

³Yahweh truly loves his people

and protects all those who belong to him.

So they prostrate themselves in front of him,

and they listen to his instructions.

⁴I gave them laws to obey,

laws that would forever be for the descendants of Jacob.

⁵So Yahweh became the king of his Israelite people

when all the tribes and their leaders had gathered together.

⁶I say this about the tribe of Reuben:

I desire that their tribe will never disappear,

but that they will never become numerous.

⁷I say this about the tribe of Judah:

Yahweh, listen to them when they call out for help;

and after they separate from the other tribes, unite them with the other tribes again.

Fight for them,

and help them to fight against their enemies.

⁸I say this about the tribe of Levi:

Yahweh, give to those who are dedicated to you the sacred stones that they will use to find out what you want to be done;

You tested them at a spring in the desert, a spring that they named Massah and also named Meribah

to find out if they would remain loyal to you.

⁹The tribe of Levi did what you told them to do
and obeyed the covenant that you had made with the Israelite people;
those laws were more important to them
than their siblings and parents and children.

¹⁰The tribe of Levi will teach the Israelite people your decrees and your laws,
and they are the ones who will burn incense and who will completely burn on the altar the offerings that the people bring.

¹¹Yahweh, bless their work
and accept all that they do.
Crush all their enemies;
do not enable their enemies to be able to fight against them again.

¹²I say this about the tribe of Benjamin:
They are the tribe that Yahweh loves;
he keeps them safe.
He protects them continually,
and he lives among their hills.

¹³I say this about the tribes of Joseph:
I desire that Yahweh will bless their land
by giving them rain from the sky
and water from deep down in the ground.

¹⁴I desire that Yahweh will bless their land by giving them good fruit ripened by the sun
and good crops in the right months.

¹⁵I desire that Yahweh give them that very nice fruit that will grow on trees in their ancient mountains.

¹⁶I desire that Yahweh will bless their land and that he fill the land with many good crops.
I desire that Yahweh will bless the tribes of Joseph in all those ways,
because he was the leader over his older brothers when they were in Egypt.

¹⁷The descendants of Joseph will be as strong as a bull;
with their weapons they will wound their enemies like a wild ox gores other animals with its horns.
They will push other people groups,
all of them, to the most distant places on the earth.
That is what the descendants of the two sons of Joseph will do,
the ten thousands of the tribe of Ephraim and the thousands of the tribe of Manasseh.

¹⁸I say this about the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar:

I desire that the people of Zebulun will prosper in their travels across the seas,
and that the people of Issachar will prosper while they stay at home and take care of their cattle and crops.

¹⁹They will invite people from the other Israelite tribes to the mountain where they worship Yahweh,
and they will offer correct sacrifices to him.

They will become rich from the trade that they carry out on the seas
and from using the sand along the sea to make things.

²⁰I say this about the tribe of Gad:

Praise Yahweh, the one who made their territory large.
The people of their tribe will attack their enemies fiercely like a lion that crouches,
waiting to tear off the arm or the scalp of some animal.

²¹They chose the best part of the land for themselves;
a large share of the land, a share that should be given to a leader was allotted to them.

When the leaders of the tribes of Israel gathered together,
they decided that the tribe of Gad should have a large share of the land.
The tribe of Gad obeyed the commands of Yahweh and the things that he decided that they should do.

²²I say this about the tribe of Dan:

The people of the tribe of Dan are like a young lion;
they leap out from their caves in the region of Bashan to attack their enemies.

²³I say this about the tribe of Naphtali:

The people of the tribe of Naphtali have been blessed by Yahweh, who has been very kind to them;
their land extends far south from Lake Galilee.

²⁴I say this about the tribe of Asher:

Yahweh will bless the descendants of Asher more than he will bless the other tribes.
Yahweh will favor them most of all.
I desire that their land will be filled with olive trees that will produce a lot of olives to make olive oil.

²⁵Their towns will be protected by high walls with gates that have bronze and iron bars;
I desire all the time that they live and not be harmed by anyone.

²⁶You people of Israel, there is no god like your God,
who rides majestically across the sky to help you.

²⁷God, who lives forever, is the one who gives you refuge;

it is as though he puts his everlasting arms under you to support you.

He will drive out your enemies while you advance;

he has told you to destroy all of them.

²⁸So you Israelite people will live safely;

you descendants of Jacob will not be disturbed by others;

in the land where you will live, there will be plenty of grain and wine,

and plenty of rain will fall from the sky.

²⁹You people of Israel, how fortunate are you.

There is certainly no nation like your nation,

whom Yahweh has rescued from being slaves in Egypt.

He will be like a shield to protect you

and like a sword to enable you to defeat your enemies.

Your enemies will come to you begging for you to act mercifully toward them,

but you will trample on their backs."

Chapter 34

¹Then Moses climbed up from the plains in the region of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the highest point on Mount Pisgah, which is across the Jordan River from Jericho. There Yahweh showed him all the land that the Israelites would occupy. He showed him the region of Gilead as far north as the city of Dan; ²all the land that the tribe of Naphtali would occupy; all the land that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh had occupied; all the land that the tribe of Judah would occupy as far west as the Mediterranean Sea; ³the desert area in the south part of Judah; and the Valley of the Jordan that extends from Jericho in the north to the city of Zoar in the south. ⁴Then Yahweh said to him, "You have now seen this land that I solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have allowed you to see it from a distance, but you will not go there."

⁵So Moses, who always served Yahweh faithfully, died there in the land of Moab, which is what Yahweh said would happen. ⁶Yahweh buried Moses' body in the valley in the land of Moab, across from the town of Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where he is buried. ⁷Moses was 120 years old when he died, but he was still very strong, and he could still see very well. ⁸The Israelite people mourned for him in the plains of Moab for thirty days.

⁹God caused Joshua to be very wise, because Moses had put his hands on Joshua to appoint him to be their new leader. The Israelite people obeyed Joshua, and they obeyed all the commands that Yahweh had given to Moses to tell to the Israelite people.

¹⁰Since the time that Moses lived, there has never been a prophet in Israel like him, for Yahweh spoke with him face to face. ¹¹No other prophet has performed all the kinds of powerful miracles that Yahweh caused him to do against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, against all his servants, and against the people of Egypt. ¹²No other prophet has been able to perform all the great and terrifying deeds that Moses performed while all the Israelites watched.

Joshua

Chapter 1

¹After Moses the servant of Yahweh, died, Yahweh said this to Nun's son Joshua, who had been Moses' servant leader: He said, ²"You know that my servant Moses is now dead. So now get ready to cross over the Jordan River, you and all these people. Enter the land that I will soon give to the people of Israel. ³Everywhere you walk in this land, I will give to you, as I promised Moses. ⁴That land will extend from the wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the northwest, to the Euphrates River, and to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. It will include all the land where the Hittites live. ⁵No group will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will help you as I helped Moses. I promise that I will not abandon you and I will never leave you.

⁶Be strong and brave, because you will lead these people so they can take this land as their own, the land that I promised to give to their ancestors. ⁷Just be strong and very brave. Be sure to obey all the laws that my servant Moses taught you; carry out each one of them. If you do so, you will be successful wherever you go. ⁸Talk with each other about the book of the law that Moses taught you. Think about those laws during the day and during the night. Follow the laws and do what they tell you to do, and they teach you to live so you may gain wealth and be successful. ⁹Do not forget that I have commanded you to be strong and brave. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged. I, Yahweh your God, will be with you wherever you go."

¹⁰Then Joshua commanded the leaders of the people of Israel, ¹¹"Go throughout the camp and give these orders to the people: 'Prepare all the food that you will take with you. In three days you will go across the Jordan River in front of you, and you will go in and capture the land that Yahweh, your God, is about to give to you.'"

¹²Then Joshua spoke to the families of the descendants of Reuben and Gad, and to the half of the tribe of Manasseh that was going to settle on the east side of the Jordan River: ¹³"Keep in mind the orders that Moses the servant of Yahweh, gave you. Moses said, 'Yahweh, your God, has promised to give you a place where you can settle down permanently—this place will be the land where you will live. ¹⁴Your wives, your little children, and your livestock may stay here in this land on the east side of the Jordan River, but all your soldiers and your fellow tribesmen must cross the river, ahead of your other fellow Israelites, in order to help them. ¹⁵You must help them in battle until Yahweh has enabled your fellow Israelites to permanently settle in the land there, the land that they will capture, the land that Yahweh your God is giving to them. Then each of you will come back to the land that you will settle in, and you will live there—I mean the land that Moses, Yahweh's servant, gave you here on the east side of the Jordan River."

¹⁶The people answered Joshua, "We will obey every order you have given us, and we will go wherever you tell us to go. ¹⁷We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. We pray that Yahweh will be with you as he was with Moses. ¹⁸We will put to death anyone who rebels and refuses to follow your orders. Just remember, Joshua, to be strong and brave!"

Chapter 2

¹Then Joshua chose two men from their camp at Acacia. He told them, "Go find out all that you can about the land, especially about Jericho." They left the camp, and they came to Jericho, to the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab. They stayed there. ²Someone told the king of Jericho, "Look! Some Israelite men have come here tonight to look at our land!" ³So the king sent a messenger to tell Rahab, "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come here to look at our land!" ⁴Now the woman had taken the men and hidden them in her house. So she said to the king's men, "Yes, it is true that those men came to me, but I did not

know where they had come from. ⁵They left when it was dark, about the time that the guards close the city gates. I do not know where they were going. If you hurry, you might catch up with them.” ⁶But in reality, the woman had taken the two men up on to the flat roof of her house and hidden them under bundles of flax that were drying on her roof. ⁷The king’s men went out of the city to search for them on the road that leads to the fords across the Jordan River. The guards shut the city gates as the king’s men went out.

⁸Before the Israelite men lay down to sleep that night, Rahab went up to the roof ⁹and said to them, “We know that Yahweh has given you this land. All our people are terrified of you—we are so afraid of you that we will not resist you at all. ¹⁰We have heard about how Yahweh dried up the water of the Sea of Reeds for you to cross when you left Egypt. We heard what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites who lived on the other side of the Jordan River, and how you totally destroyed everyone and everything in their kingdom. ¹¹When we heard about those things, we were terrified. We no longer have courage to fight against you, for Yahweh is God, and he rules everything up in heaven and down here on earth. ¹²So now I want you to solemnly promise me before Yahweh, so that he may punish you if you do not do what you say. Promise me that you will act kindly to me and my family. Give me a guarantee that you will do what you promise, ¹³and that you will spare the lives of my father and my mother, my brothers and sisters, and all of their families, and that you will rescue my family when the Israelites destroy this city.” ¹⁴The two men replied, “We will give up our lives if we do not do as we say! If you do not tell others what we are planning to do, then we will have to act kindly toward all your family, when Yahweh gives us this land.” ¹⁵One of the outside walls of the house where Rahab lived was part of the wall of the city. She fastened a rope through a window that was built into the wall, so the men could climb out the window and down the wall. ¹⁶Then she said to them, “When you leave the city, go up into the hills so that the men who are searching for you will not find you. Hide in caves in the hills for three days until the men who are searching for you come back. Then you can return to your camp.” ¹⁷The two men gave her a red cord and said to her, “This is what you must do, if you do not do this, we will not be required to do what we have solemnly promised. ¹⁸When we come into the land, you must tie this red cord in the window by which you let us down, and you must gather together your father and your mother and your brothers, and everyone in your father’s household. ¹⁹If anyone in your family goes outside this house into the street, he will be risking his life, and we will not be responsible if he is killed. But if anyone who is in this house with you is injured, we will be guilty. ²⁰Also, if you tell anyone what we are planning to do, we are not required to do what we had promised to do for you and your family.” ²¹Rahab said, “I agree to do what you say.” So she sent them away, and they left her. And she tied the red cord so it would hang out of the window. ²²When the two men left the city, they went up into the hills. They stayed there for three days while the men who had been sent by the king continued to search for them. They searched all along the road, but they did not find the two men. ²³Then the two men started back toward their camp. They went down to the river, crossed it and returned so they could report to Joshua. They told him everything that had happened to them. ²⁴They said to Joshua, “Yahweh has indeed given this land to us. The people there will not be able to resist us because they are too afraid.”

Chapter 3

¹Joshua and all the other Israelites got up early the next morning. They left their camp at the Acacias and went down to the Jordan River. They camped there before they crossed over the river. ²After three days, the officers went through the middle of the camp. ³They instructed the people, “As soon as you see the priests, some of the descendants of Levi, carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh your God, then you will know it is time to leave this place and follow the sacred chest. ⁴Keep nine hundred meters away from it. Do not come closer than that to it. You do not know the way you should go, since you have not gone this way before.”

⁵Then Joshua told the people, “Perform the ceremonies needed to make yourselves acceptable to Yahweh and to give him honor, because tomorrow he is going to do things for you that will amaze you.”

⁶Then Joshua said to the priests, “Carry the chest and go in front of the people.” So they lifted up the sacred chest and went in front of the people.

⁷Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "This is the day that I will begin to show all people of Israel that you are a great leader. Then they will honor you and know that, as I was with Moses, I am with you. ⁸Tell the priests who are carrying the sacred chest, 'When you come to the edge of the Jordan River, stand still in the Jordan.'" ⁹Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to what Yahweh, your God, has said. ¹⁰This is how you will know that God, who can do anything, is among you. With your own eyes you will see how he will take away the land from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. ¹¹See! The sacred chest that belongs to the God who rules over all the earth, is about to be carried into the Jordan River ahead of you. ¹²So choose twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. ¹³When the priests who are carrying the chest set their feet in the waters of the Jordan River, the water will stop flowing. The water coming from upstream will stop and stay in one heap. It will not flow down the river."

¹⁴So when the Israelite crossed the river, the priests who were carrying sacred chest went in front of them. ¹⁵And as soon as the priests reached the edge of the Jordan river and stepped into the water (now it was the springtime, when the river floods over its banks), ¹⁶and the water stopped flowing and it piled up far upstream. The water did not flow in the Jordan from the town called Adam, near Zarethan, all the way down to the Sea of Arabah (which is called the Dead Sea), so the people were able to cross the river near Jericho. ¹⁷The priests who were carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan River; they continued to stand there until all the people of Israel crossed the river on dry ground.

Chapter 4

¹After the people of Israel all crossed over the Jordan River, Yahweh said to Joshua, ²"Choose twelve men, one from each tribe, and tell them to pick up twelve large stones from the middle of the Jordan, where the priests are standing in the dry riverbed. ³Carry those stones and put them down at the place you will stay tonight."

⁴So Joshua chose twelve men, one from each tribe. Joshua called them together ⁵and said to them, "Go into the middle of the Jordan riverbed, to the place where the priests are standing and holding the sacred chest that Yahweh, your God, gave you. Each of you must pick up a large stone, one for each tribe, each one carrying a stone on his shoulder—twelve stones for the twelve tribes of the people of Israel. ⁶These stones will be a monument for you to see. In the future, your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' ⁷Tell them that the water in the Jordan River was blocked off when the priests were carrying the sacred chest that Yahweh gave us. When the chest was carried into the Jordan River, the water was blocked off so that we were able to cross the Jordan on dry ground. Where we leave these stones is the place for the people of Israel to forever remember what Yahweh has done."

⁸So the people of Israel did what Joshua commanded them to do. They went and picked up twelve large stones from the middle of the Jordan riverbed, one stone for each of the tribes of Israel, just as Yahweh had told Joshua, and they carried the stones to where they were staying, and they put the stones down there. ⁹Then Joshua took twelve other stones and stacked them up in the middle of the Jordan River, where the priests who carried the sacred chest of Yahweh were standing. And that monument is still there to this day.

¹⁰The priests who carried the chest stood in the middle of the Jordan River until the people had finished crossing the river, as Yahweh had commanded Joshua to tell them to do. This also was as Moses had commanded Joshua to do. The people crossed the river quickly. ¹¹As soon as all the people had crossed over, then the sacred chest of Yahweh and the priests who carried it, crossed over. All the people were there watching. ¹²The soldiers of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and of half of the soldiers of the tribe of Manasseh, crossed over ahead of the rest of the Israelite people. As Moses had ordered them to do, they marched in the formation of an army. ¹³About forty thousand men were marching before Yahweh. These men were armed and prepared for war, and they were heading for the plains of Jericho where they would fight a battle. ¹⁴On that day, all the people of Israel saw that Yahweh had made Joshua a great leader. And they honored Joshua just as they had honored Moses—all the days of his life. ¹⁵Yahweh said to Joshua, ¹⁶"Now order the priests who are carrying the sacred chest of the testimony to come up from the dry Jordan riverbed." ¹⁷So Joshua commanded the priests to come up from the river. ¹⁸Then the priests, carrying the sacred chest containing the Ten Commandments that Yahweh had given to Moses, came up out of the riverbed.

And as soon as they walked up out of the riverbed, the water of the Jordan River flowed again, and the river flooded over again, as it had done four days before.

¹⁹It was on the tenth day of the first month of that year that the people crossed over the Jordan River and they camped at a place called Gilgal (which is east of the city of Jericho). ²⁰Joshua set up the large stones at Gilgal. ²¹He said to the people of Israel, "In the future, your descendants will ask, 'Why are these stones here?' ²²Tell them, 'This is where Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.' ²³Yahweh, your God, dried up the river for you, until you had all crossed over. Yahweh, the God you worship, did to the Jordan River just as he did to the Sea of Reeds, when he caused it to become dry until we had all crossed over it, just as he did here. ²⁴Yahweh did that in order that all the peoples of the earth may know that he is powerful, and so you may forever give him the honor he deserves."

Chapter 5

¹All the kings of the Amorites on the west of the Jordan River and all the kings of Canaanites, who lived close to the Mediterranean coast, heard about how Yahweh had dried up the water of the Jordan River until all the people of Israel had crossed over. They were so afraid that they became too afraid to fight the Israelites, because they had heard all about them.

²At that time Yahweh said to Joshua, "Now make knives from flint stones and circumcise all the Israelite males who have not been circumcised." ³So Joshua made sharp stone knives and circumcised the Israelite males at a place that is now called Gibeath Haaraloth. ⁴The reason they did that is that all the men who left Egypt, all those old enough to be soldiers, they all had been circumcised, but all of them had died in the desert after they left Egypt. ⁵They had been circumcised in Egypt, but the boys who had been born while they were in the desert after they left Egypt, had not been circumcised. ⁶The people of Israel walked through the desert for forty years, until all the people, including all the men who were old enough to be soldiers, they all had died. They had not obeyed Yahweh, so Yahweh said that they would not see the land that he had promised to them—a land that was very fertile—the land was so fertile that they said it had milk and honey flowing through it, just as rivers flow with water. ⁷The sons of those who had disobeyed Yahweh were the ones whom Joshua circumcised at Gilgal. They were circumcised because they had not been circumcised while they were traveling in the desert. ⁸After all the Israelite males had been circumcised, they remained in the camp and rested until they healed. ⁹Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you." So, the name of the place is Gilgal, even now.

¹⁰In the evening of the fourteenth day of that month, while the Israelite people were camped at Gilgal, on the plain near the city of Jericho, there they celebrated the Passover feast. ¹¹The day after the Passover they ate some bread made without yeast, and they roasted the grain. ¹²The next day God stopped sending manna for them to eat. They ate food that had grown in the land of Canaan beginning that year.

¹³While Joshua was standing near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man in front of him. The man had drawn his sword and was holding it in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked him, "Are you on our side, or are you on the side of our enemies?" ¹⁴The man said to Joshua, "Neither side. I am the commander of Yahweh's army, and now I have come." Then Joshua fell to the ground with his face on the earth to show him respect. Joshua said to him, "What do you, my master, command me to do? I am your servant." ¹⁵The commander of Yahweh's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandals off of your feet, for the ground on which you are standing is holy." So Joshua took off his sandals.

Chapter 6

¹Now every gate of the city of Jericho was shut tight, because the people were afraid of the army of Israel. No one could go enter or leave the city. ²Yahweh said to Joshua, "See what I am doing! I am giving Jericho to you. It will be yours—the city along with its king and all its brave soldiers. ³You will march around the city, one time all the way around it. All the brave soldiers will go around it one time each day for six days. ⁴Tell seven priests to march around

with them. They will each carry a trumpet as they march before the sacred chest of Yahweh. On the seventh day, the army must march around the city seven times, and the priests must play the trumpets with a loud blast of sound while they march. ⁵After they have all marched around the city seven times, the priests must make a very long blast with their ram's horn trumpets. When the people of Israel hear that, they must shout very loudly, and the city wall will collapse. Then every soldier must advance straight into the city."

⁶So Joshua summoned the priests and said to them, "Tell four priests to carry Yahweh's sacred chest, and tell seven other priests to carry trumpets made from ram's horns and let them go in front of the sacred chest of Yahweh."

⁷And he told the people, "Go on and march around the city and let the armed men go ahead of Yahweh's sacred chest."

⁸Just as Joshua commanded his army, the seven priests, each one carrying a trumpet, marched as Yahweh had directed them. As they walked around the city, the priests gave a blast on their trumpets. The ones who carried Yahweh's sacred chest followed them. ⁹The armed soldiers marched in front of the priests who were blowing on their trumpets. When the rest of the soldiers followed the chest, while they were all marching, the priests kept blowing their trumpets. ¹⁰But the rest of the people were silent, because Joshua had commanded them, saying, "Do not make a war cry. Do not yell or say even one word until the day when I tell you to shout. On that day, you must shout!" ¹¹So the men carrying Yahweh's sacred chest and all the others did what Joshua told them to do. They marched around the city once each day. Then they all returned to the camp and stayed there at night.

¹²The next morning, Joshua and the priests got up early and picked up Yahweh's sacred chest. ¹³The seven priests who were carrying trumpets made of rams horns went in front of the men carrying the sacred chest. They gave loud blasts from their trumpets as they marched. The soldiers walked in front of them and the rear guard of the army followed the sacred chest of Yahweh. Again, the priests kept blowing their trumpets. ¹⁴So on that second day, once again they marched around the city one time and then returned to the camp. They did the same thing for six days.

¹⁵On the seventh day, they got up at dawn; they all marched around the city the same way that they had done before, but this time they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶As they were marching around the seventh time, when the priests were about to sound the long blast on their trumpets, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! Because Yahweh is giving this city to you! ¹⁷Yahweh has declared that you must destroy the city and everything in it to show that it belongs to him. Only Rahab the prostitute will live—and all who are in her house with her—because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸And because Yahweh has declared that everything must be destroyed, you must not take any of the things in the city. If you take anything, you will cause Yahweh to destroy the camp of Israel and bring trouble to it. ¹⁹But all the silver and gold and articles made from iron and bronze that you find, you must set apart for Yahweh. You must put those things in his treasury."

²⁰So they did what Joshua told them to do. When the priests blew a long blast on their trumpets, the people gave a loud shout, and the wall of the city collapsed! Then the people went up into the city, going straight into the city from wherever they were standing when the wall fell, and they captured the city. ²¹They killed every living thing in the city—men and women, young people and old people, even cattle and sheep and donkeys.

²²Then Joshua said to the two men who had spied on the land, "Go to the prostitute's house. Bring her out, along with all her family, just as you solemnly promised to her." ²³So, the young men who had examined the land went and brought Rahab out. They brought out her father, mother, brothers, and all the relatives that were with her. They brought them to a place outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴Then they burned the city, along with everything in it. They saved the silver, gold, and all the vessels of bronze and iron, which they put into the treasury of the house of Yahweh. ²⁵But Joshua allowed Rahab the prostitute, and her father's household, and everyone with her, to live. Her descendants live in Israel to this day because she hid the spies that Joshua sent to spy on Jericho, and they promised to spare her life.

²⁶At that time, Joshua declared this very solemnly: "May Yahweh curse anyone who rebuilds this city, Jericho. When that person lays its foundation, may his oldest son die. And when he finishes building the city wall and sets up its gates, may his youngest son die."

²⁷Yahweh was with Joshua, and everyone in the land knew who Joshua was.

Chapter 7

¹Yahweh had commanded that all the things that they had captured in Jericho should be destroyed to show that they belonged to him. But there was a man from the tribe of Judah named Achan. He was a son of Carmi, a grandson of Zabdi, and a great-grandson of Zerah. He disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded and took for himself some of those things. So Yahweh became very angry with the Israelites.

²Now Joshua told some of his men to go from Jericho to the city of Ai, which was east of Bethel and near Beth Aven. He said to them, "Go to Ai and scout the area." So the men went up and they scouted the town.

³When they returned to Joshua they said, "There are only a few people in Ai. So just send two or three thousand to attack them. There is no need to make all our soldiers go." ⁴So about three thousand Israelite men went to attack Ai. But they did not defeat them. Instead, they had to run for their lives. ⁵The enemy killed about thirty-six Israelites and chased the rest from the city gate to the bottom of the hill, and then to a place where people had cut stone out from a hill. When the people of Israel saw this, they were very afraid and lost all their courage.

⁶Joshua and the other Israeli leaders tore their clothes because they were very sad about being defeated. They prostrated themselves on the ground in front of the Sacred Tent in which was the sacred chest. They stayed there until that evening. They also threw dirt on their heads to show that they were very sad about what had happened.

⁷Then Joshua prayed and said, "Yahweh Lord, you brought us Israelites safely across the Jordan River. So why are you now allowing the Amorites to destroy us? We should have made a different decision; we should have stayed on the other side of the Jordan River! ⁸O Lord, I have no more words to say to you. Israel has run away in defeat. We have turned our backs in shame as we ran away from our enemies. I do not know what to say. ⁹The Canaanites and all the other people who are living in this land will hear about this. Then they will surround us and kill all of us! Then what will you do to defend your honor?"

¹⁰But Yahweh said to Joshua, "Stand up! Stop lying there with your face in the dirt! ¹¹Israel has sinned. You have disobeyed the commands that I told you to obey. They have lied, they have stolen, and they have taken what they stole and put them in with their own possessions, in order to hide it. ¹²That is why the people of Israel have been unable to defeat their enemies. That is why they have run away, and now you yourselves will be destroyed. If you do not do as I commanded you and destroy everything that you took from Jericho, I will not help you anymore!

¹³Now go and tell the people that tomorrow they must set themselves apart and prepare to honor Yahweh. "You have kept for yourselves the things that I told you to destroy, that should have been given to me," says Yahweh, the God of Israel. "You will never defeat your enemies until you get rid of those things you took from Jericho that you have hidden with your possessions."

¹⁴Tomorrow morning you must present yourselves before me, tribe by tribe. Then the tribe that I select by lot will come before me by each of their families. The family that I select by lot will come near by each of their households. The household that I select by lot will come before me each one, one at a time. ¹⁵Then the one who has taken some of the things that should have been given to me—he will be destroyed in a fire. He and everything he owns will be burned, because he has disobeyed the promise and agreement that Yahweh made with us, and he has committed a disgraceful sin among the people of Israel."

¹⁶Early the next morning, Joshua told all the Israelite people to come near to the place of worship, tribe by tribe. When they did that, Yahweh indicated that a man from the tribe of Judah was the one selected. ¹⁷Then the clans of Judah presented themselves, and Yahweh selected the clan of Zerah. Then the families of Zerah's clan presented themselves, and Yahweh indicated that he was selecting someone from the family of Zabdi. ¹⁸Then Joshua told the men from that family to present each member of their family, one at a time, so that the guilty person may be selected. And Yahweh indicated that Achan was the guilty man and he was taken out of the people of Judah. Achan was the son of Carmi; Carmi was the son of Zabdi; and Zabdi was the son of Zerah.

¹⁹Then Joshua said to Achan, "Son, make your confession to Yahweh, the God of Israel. Tell me what you did, and do not try to hide it from me."

²⁰Achan replied, "It is true. I have sinned against Yahweh, the God of Israel. This is what I did: ²¹Among the things in Jericho that I saw was a beautiful coat from Babylonia. I also saw over two kilograms of silver and some gold that weighed six hundred grams. I wanted those things very much for myself, so I took them. I buried them in the ground under my tent. You will find them there. The silver is buried beneath it all."

²²So Joshua sent some men to find those things. They ran to Achan's tent and found all the things hidden there.

²³The men brought them all out of the tent and took them to Joshua and the rest of Israel. Then they laid them out, like an offering to Yahweh.

²⁴Then Joshua and the rest of the people led Achan down to the valley of Akor. They also brought the silver, the coat, the gold, Achan's wife and sons and daughters, and his cattle and donkeys and sheep, and his tent, and everything else that he owned. ²⁵Joshua said, "I do not know why you caused so much trouble for us, but now Yahweh will bring trouble to you." Then all the people threw stones at Achan so that he died, and they burned them all with fire, and they threw stones at them all.

²⁶They piled rocks over the ashes of their corpses, and those rocks are still there. That is why that valley is called the Valley of Trouble to this day. After that, Yahweh was no longer angry with the Israeli people.

Chapter 8

¹Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take with you all the soldiers you have and go there again. Go up to Ai. See! I am giving you victory over the king of Ai, and you will capture his people, and his city, and his land. ²Your army will do to the people of Ai and their king like what you did to the people of Jericho and their king. But this time I will permit you to take all their possessions and keep them for yourselves. But first, tell some of your soldiers to hide behind the city and prepare to attack it."

³So Joshua led all his army toward Ai. He chose thirty thousand men—his strongest men, men known for their bravery in battle—and he sent them out during the night. ⁴He said to them, "Pay attention! Some of you must prepare a surprise attack on the city—an attack formed behind the city. Do not go far from the city. All of you get ready to attack. ⁵I and the men who are with me will march toward the city in the morning. The men in the city will come out to fight us, as they did before. Then we will turn around and start to run away from them. ⁶They will think that we are running away from them like we did before. So they will chase us away from the city. While we are running away from them, ⁷those of you who are hiding must come out and rush into the city and capture it. Yahweh, your God, will give the city to you. ⁸After you capture the city, burn it. Do what Yahweh has commanded us to do. Those are the orders I am giving to you."

⁹Then Joshua prepared to send some of them to hide and wait between Ai and Bethel, which was west of Ai. But Joshua slept that night among the main force of soldiers.

¹⁰Early the next morning, Joshua gathered his soldiers together. He led the soldiers and the other Israelite leaders; they all went to attack the people of Ai. ¹¹They all set up their tents close to Ai, just to the north of the city, where all the people of the city could see them. There was a valley between them and the city of Ai. ¹²Joshua had taken about five thousand men and told them to go and stay hidden so they could make a surprise attack, just west of the city, between Ai and Bethel. ¹³So those men did that. The main group of soldiers was north of the city, and the others were hiding west of the city. That night Joshua went down into the valley.

¹⁴When the king of Ai saw the Israelite army, he and his soldiers got up early the next morning and quickly went out of the city to fight them. They went to a place east of the city, and from there they could look over the plain of the Jordan River, but they did not know that some Israelite soldiers were hiding ready to attack them from behind the city. ¹⁵Joshua and the Israelite soldiers who were with him allowed the army of Ai to push them back. And the

army of Israel ran toward the wilderness. ¹⁶The men in Ai were ordered to chase after Joshua and his men. So they left the city and pursued Joshua and his army. ¹⁷All the men of Ai and the men of Bethel pursued the Israelite army. They did not leave even one man in Ai to defend it. And they left the city gates wide open as they went to pursue after the soldiers of Israel.

¹⁸Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Lift up your spear and point it toward Ai, because I am going to enable your soldiers to capture it!" So Joshua pointed his spear toward Ai. ¹⁹When the Israelite men who were hiding saw that, they rushed out from the places where they were hiding and ran into the city. They captured it and quickly set it on fire.

²⁰When the men of Ai looked back, they saw smoke rising from their city. But they could not escape, because the Israelite troops stopped running away and had turned around and now were facing the army that had been coming after them. ²¹Joshua and his men saw that the men who had been hiding had captured the city and were burning it, and they saw the smoke rising. So they turned back and began killing the men of Ai. ²²Meanwhile, the soldiers who had captured the city came out and attacked them from the rear. So the men of Ai were surrounded by the two groups of Israelite soldiers. None of the men of Ai escaped. The Israelites fought until they killed all of them. ²³But they captured the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua.

²⁴While they were fighting, the Israelite army pursued the men of Ai into the fields and into the wilderness, and killed all of them. Then they went to Ai and killed everyone and anything still alive there. ²⁵They killed twelve thousand men and women on that day. They killed all the people of Ai. ²⁶Joshua continued to point his spear toward Ai until all the people in Ai had been killed. ²⁷The Israelite soldiers took for themselves the animals and the other things that had belonged to the people of Ai, just as Yahweh had told Joshua that they should do.

²⁸Joshua and his soldiers burned Ai and caused it to become a pile of ruins forever. It is an abandoned place even today. ²⁹Joshua hanged the king of Ai on a tree and left his corpse hanging there until the evening. At sunset Joshua told his men to take the king's body down from the tree and to throw it where the city gate had been. After they did that, they made a great mound of rocks on top of his body. That pile of rocks is still there to this day.

³⁰Then Joshua told his men to build on Mount Ebal an altar for Yahweh, the God of Israel. ³¹They built it just like Moses, the man who served God well, had written previously in the laws that God had given to him. They made it from stones that had not been cut, stones on which they had done no work using iron tools. The Israelites then offered sacrifices to Yahweh that were burned completely on the altar. They also made sacrifices to promise friendship with him. ³²As the Israelites watched, Joshua wrote on stones a copy of the laws that Yahweh had given to Moses. ³³The Israelite leaders, the officials, the judges, and other Israelites were there, standing on either side of the sacred chest. All the people stood, facing the priests and Levites who carried the sacred chest. Many people who were not Israelites were also there. Half of the people stood on one side of the valley below Mount Ebal, and the other half of the people stood on the other side of the valley below Mount Gerizim. The sacred chest was in the valley between the two groups. And they blessed the people of Israel just as Moses the servant of Yahweh had told them to do, at the very first.

³⁴Then Joshua read to the people all that Moses had written previously. That included what Yahweh had taught them and the ways that he promised to bless them if they obeyed his commands, or to curse them if they disobeyed them. ³⁵Joshua carefully read all the commands that Moses had given; he read every word in front of the entire assembly of Israel. All the women and the little children were there as well, and also the foreigners who were living among the people of Israel.

Chapter 9

¹There were several kings who ruled in lands on the west side of the Jordan River. They were the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. They lived in the hill country, in the lower hills further west, and on the plains beside the Mediterranean Sea. They heard about what happened at Ai. ²So they all gathered their armies under one leader to fight against Joshua and the Israelite army.

³However, when the people who lived in the city of Gibeon heard that Joshua's army had defeated the people of Jericho and Ai, ⁴they decided to trick the Israelites. They sent some of their men who pretended to be ambassadors for their people. These men gathered some old sacks and some old leather wine bags that had been mended after they were cracked, and they put these on the backs of their donkeys. ⁵They put on old sandals that had been patched and wore old ragged clothes. And they took along bread that was dry and moldy. ⁶They went to where Joshua and the other Israelites had set up their tents near Gilgal. They said to them, "We have traveled from a land very far away. Please make a peace treaty with us."

⁷The Israelite leaders said to those men from Gilead (they were Hivites), "Perhaps you really live close by. How can we make a treaty with you?"

⁸They replied to Joshua and insisted, "We are your servants!"

But Joshua answered, "Who are you? Where do you actually come from?"

⁹The men from Gibeon answered, "We want to be your servants. We have come here from a distant land, because of the fame of Yahweh your God. We heard about all the great things he did in Egypt. ¹⁰And we have heard about what he did to the two kings of the Amorites who are on the east side of the Jordan River—Sihon, the king who ruled in Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth. ¹¹So our leaders and the rest of our people said to us, 'Take some food and go to talk with the Israelites. Tell them, "We want to be your servants. So make a peace agreement with us."' ¹²"Look at our bread. It was fresh and warm when we baked it on the day that we left our homes to come here to you. But now it is dry and moldy. ¹³Look at our leather wine bags, they were new when we filled them with wine before we left, but now they are cracked and old. Our clothes and our sandals are worn out from traveling on the long road to come here."

¹⁴The Israelite leaders accepted some of their old food and ate a meal with them in order to make a peace treaty. They did not think to ask Yahweh what they should do. ¹⁵In this way, Joshua agreed to make peace. The Israelites made a treaty with the men from Gibeon, in which they agreed not to kill these strangers. All the Israelite leaders made a solemn vow to this effect.

¹⁶However, three days later the Israelites found out that the men had only come from Gibeon and that they really lived close by. ¹⁷So they went to where the men from Gibeon lived. After traveling only three days, they came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim. ¹⁸But the Israelites did not attack those cities because they had made a solemn vow to live peacefully with them, and because Yahweh had heard the promise they made.

All the people of Israel grumbled against their leaders for making this treaty. ¹⁹But the leaders answered, "We promised to live peacefully with them and Yahweh, the God of Israel, heard us promise to do that. So now we cannot do them any harm. ²⁰If we kill them, God will be very angry with us and punish us because we did not keep our promise to them, a promise that binds us by solemn oath. But this is what we can do: ²¹We will allow them to live, but they will become our servants; they will cut wood and carry water for all the people." This is what happened, just as the leaders planned.

²²Then Joshua summoned the men from Gibeon and asked them, "Why did you lie to us? Your homes are near to us; you live close to us, but you told us that you were from a far land! ²³Now you are going to live under a curse. You will become our slaves. You will always be our slaves, and you will be forced to cut wood and carry water for the house of our God."

²⁴The men from Gibeon replied, "We lied to you because we were afraid that you would kill us. We heard that Yahweh, your God, had declared to his servant Moses that he would enable your people to kill all of us in Canaan, and that he would give you our lands. ²⁵So now you should decide what you will do with us. Do to us whatever you think is good and right."

²⁶So Joshua saved the lives of the people of Gibeon; he did not permit the army of Israel to harm them. ²⁷Instead, he forced them to become the Israelites' slaves. They cut wood and carried water for Israel. They also brought the

wood and water that was needed for the sacred altar of Yahweh. And the people of Gibeon are still doing that to this present time.

Chapter 10

¹Adoni-Zedek, the king of the city of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua's army had captured Ai and had completely destroyed everything in the town. He heard that they had done to the people of Ai and to their king the same thing that they had done to the people of Jericho and their king. He also heard that the people of the city of Gibeon had made peace with the Israelite people and that they were now living among the Israelites. ²The people of Jerusalem became very afraid because Gibeon was an important city, like the other cities that were so important that they had their own kings. Gibeon was larger than Ai, and all its soldiers were experienced. ³So King Adoni-Zedek sent a message to Hosham the king of Hebron, to Piram the king of Jarmuth, to Jarmuth the king of Lachish, and to Debir the king of Eglon. ⁴In the message he said, "Please come up and help me attack Gibeon, because the people of Gibeon have made peace with Joshua and the Israelites."

⁵So those five kings who ruled all the groups who were descendants of Amor—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Debir—came to Gibeon with all of their soldiers and surrounded the city, to fight against it.

⁶The people of Gibeon sent a message to Joshua while he was in the camp at Gilgal. They said, "We are your servants. So do not forsake us. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because the kings of the Amorites and their armies have joined their forces together to attack us!"

⁷So Joshua and all his army, including the soldiers and his best fighting men, marched up from Gilgal. ⁸Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of those armies! I will enable your army to defeat them. None of their soldiers will resist you."

⁹Joshua's army marched all night and arrived very early in the morning from Gilgal. ¹⁰And Yahweh caused their enemies to become confused when they saw the Israelite army. Joshua led the army and he killed them—a great number of them were killed at Gibeon, and he came after the rest of them as they were going up the road to Beth Horon. He also killed them along the road that goes to the cities of Azekah and Makkedah. ¹¹As they fled in front of the Israelite army, Yahweh threw down on them huge stones from the sky. More of them died from hailstones than died by the swords of the army of Israel.

¹²On the day that Yahweh enabled the Israelite army to defeat the Amorites, Joshua said to Yahweh while the Israelite people were watching,

"Sun, stand still over Gibeon,

and you, moon, be still over the Valley of Aijalon."

¹³And the sun stood still and the moon did not move, until the Israelite army killed their enemies. Was this not written in the Book of Jashar?

"The sun stopped while it was in the middle of the sky,

and did not set for about a whole day."

¹⁴On that day, Yahweh performed a great miracle. There was never a day like that previously, and there has never been a day like that since, when Yahweh did this kind of thing because a human being asked him to. On that day, Yahweh truly went to war for Israel.

¹⁵Joshua and all Israel with him returned to their camp at Gilgal.

¹⁶Now the five kings ran away and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah. ¹⁷Then someone told Joshua, "We found those five kings, hiding in a cave at Makkedah!" ¹⁸When Joshua heard that, he said, "Roll some very large stones

over the entrance of the cave, and leave some soldiers there to guard them. ¹⁹But do not stay there! Pursue your enemies! Attack them from behind! Do not allow them to escape to their cities, because Yahweh, your God, will help you triumph over them."

²⁰So Joshua's army did what he told them to do. They killed almost all of the enemy soldiers, but a few of them survived and were able to reach their cities. ²¹Then Joshua's army returned to Joshua, who was still in their camp at Makkedah. No one in the land dared any longer to criticize the Israelites.

²²Then Joshua said, "Open the entrance of the cave and bring out to me those five kings!" ²³So the soldiers brought those five kings out of the cave—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. ²⁴When they brought those kings to Joshua and forced them to lie on the ground, he summoned all the Israelite soldiers and he said to the army commanders, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings!" So the commanders did that. ²⁵Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid of any of our enemies! Never be discouraged! Be strong and courageous. This is what Yahweh will do to all the enemies you will fight!" ²⁶Then Joshua killed each of the five kings with his sword and hung their bodies from five trees. He left their bodies to hang on the trees until sunset. ²⁷At sunset, Joshua told them to take the bodies down from the trees and throw them into the cave where they were hiding. So the soldiers did that, and then they put those large rocks at the entrance of the cave again. And the bones of the kings are in that cave even to this day.

²⁸That is how Joshua's army attacked and captured Makkedah. They killed the king and everyone else in the city. They did not leave even any living creature alive. They did to the king of Makkedah the same thing that they had done to the king of Jericho.

²⁹Then Joshua and all Israel went southwest from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. ³⁰Yahweh enabled the Israelites to conquer that city and its king. Joshua killed everything that lived in the city; he did not spare even one person. Joshua killed the king of Libnah just as he had killed the king of Jericho.

³¹Then Joshua and his army went south from Libnah to Lachish. He surrounded the city and waged war against it.

³²On the second day of the battle, Yahweh gave the city to the Israelites, and they conquered it. They killed everything that lived in it, including all the people. He did at Lachish the same thing that he had done at Libnah.

³³King Horam from Gezer and his army came to help the soldiers of Lachish, but Joshua's army defeated Horam and his army, and did not allow even one of them to remain alive.

³⁴Then Joshua and his army went west from Lachish to the city of Eglon. They surrounded it and attacked it. ³⁵On that same day, they captured the city and killed everyone in it, just as they had done at Lachish.

³⁶Then Joshua and his army marched from Eglon up into the hills to the city of Hebron. They waged war against it

³⁷and captured it. They killed the king and every living thing, as they had done at Eglon. They did not leave one person alive.

³⁸Then Joshua and his army turned and went to the city of Debir and waged war against it. ³⁹They captured the city and its king, and they also captured the nearby villages. Then they killed every living thing in it; they did not allow even one person to stay alive. They did to these people the same as they had done at Hebron and Libnah.

⁴⁰In this way, Joshua and his army conquered the entire southern part of Canaan. They defeated the kings who ruled the hill country, the southern Judean wilderness, the lowlands, and the foothills. They killed every living thing in those places, just as Yahweh, the God of Israel commanded them. ⁴¹Joshua's soldiers killed people in all the cities from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza, including all the country of Goshen to Gibeon. ⁴²In one campaign, Joshua's army conquered all the kings and took possession of all their territory, because Yahweh, the God of Israel, was fighting for them.

⁴³Then Joshua and his army returned to their camp at Gilgal.

Chapter 11

¹When King Jabin of Hazor heard about all these things that had happened, he sent messages to Jobab, king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Akshaph, requesting them to send their armies to come and help him fight against the Israelites. ²He also sent messages to the kings in the northern hills and to the kings in the plain along the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee, in the low country. He also sent a message to the king of the high country of Dor in the west, ³to the kings of the Canaanites in both the east and the west, to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and to the Jebusites who lived in the hill country, and to the Hivites by Mount Hermon in the region of Mizpah. ⁴So the armies of all those kings gathered together. Their men were as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. They also came with horses and chariots in great numbers. ⁵All of those kings met at the fixed time and set up their armies in a camp at the brook of Merom, in order to wage war against Israel.

⁶Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because at this time tomorrow I will give them to you. You will defeat them and kill all of them. Then you must cripple all their horses and burn all their chariots."

⁷So Joshua and his army came to the brook of Merom and without warning attacked their enemies. ⁸Yahweh enabled the Israelites to defeat them. They pursued them to the city of Sidon, to Misrephothmaim, and to Mizpah in the east. They attacked them until they had killed them all. ⁹Then Joshua did what Yahweh told them to do: He crippled their enemies' horses and he burned up their chariots.

¹⁰So Joshua and his army went back to the city of Hazor, and captured it, and killed their king. Hazor was the most important city of all these kingdoms that fought against Israel. ¹¹They killed everything that was living in Hazor, and then they burned the city to ashes.

¹²Joshua's army captured all of those cities and killed all of their kings. They did that as Moses, the man who served Yahweh well, had commanded them to do. ¹³Joshua's men burned Hazor, but they did not burn any of the other cities that were built on mounds and were surrounded by wall. ¹⁴The Israelites took for themselves the animals that they found in the fields and everything else that was valuable. But they killed every human being and every living thing in the cities. ¹⁵As Yahweh had given Moses instructions to act, in the same way Moses also gave Joshua commands to act. And Joshua did everything that Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

¹⁶Joshua's army defeated all the people who were living in that land. They took control of the hill country and the southern Judean wilderness, all the area of Goshen, the western foothills, and the plain along the Jordan. They took control of all the mountains in Israel and of all the lowlands near the mountains. ¹⁷They took control over all the land from Mount Halak in the south of Edom to Baalgaal in the valley near the region of Lebanon to the north, near Mount Hermon. They captured all the kings of those areas and killed them. ¹⁸Joshua's men fought against all those kings for a long time. ¹⁹There was only one city that made a peace treaty with the Israelites; they were the people of the Hivites who lived in Gibeon. The Israelites captured all the other cities in battles. ²⁰Yahweh caused the people in all those other groups to be stubborn, with the result that they fought against the Israelite army, and so God used the Israelite army to destroy them all. God did not hold back the Israelite army from totally destroying their enemies. This is what Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

²¹Joshua's army also fought the Anakite giants who lived in the hills near Hebron, Debir, and Anah. They also fought against the people who lived in the hill country of Judah and Israel, and they killed all of those people and destroyed their cities as well. ²²As a result, there were no descendants of Anak who remained alive in Israel. Only a few remained alive in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. ²³Joshua's army took control of all the land, just as Yahweh long ago had told Moses to do. Yahweh gave the land to the Israelites, because he had promised to give it to them. Then Joshua divided the land among the Israelite tribes. And after that, there was peace in the land.

Chapter 12

¹The Israelites took control of the land that was east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River gorge in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, including all the land on the eastern side of the plain along the Jordan.

²Sihon was the king of the Amorites. He lived in Heshbon and ruled over the area from Aroer along the Arnon River gorge, north to the Jabbok River. His land started in the middle of the gorge, which was the border between his land and the land of the Ammonites. Sihon also ruled over half of the region of Gilead. ³Sihon also ruled over the land on the eastern plain along the Jordan, from the Sea of Galilee south to the Dead Sea. He also ruled over the land east of the Dead Sea from Beth Jeshimoth south to Mount Pisgah.

⁴The other king whom the Israelite army defeated was Og, the king of the region of Bashan. He was the last of the descendants of the giant people of Rapha. He lived in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. ⁵He ruled over the area from Mount Hermon and Salekah in the north, and over all Bashan in the east, and to the borders of the Geshurites and Maacathites to the west. Og ruled over half of the region of Gilead, as far as the border of the land ruled by Sihon, king of Heshbon.

⁶Moses, who had served Yahweh so faithfully, and all the Israelite army had defeated the armies of those kings. Then Moses gave that land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

⁷Joshua and the Israelite army also defeated kings who ruled over the land on the west side of the Jordan River. That land was between Baal Gad in the valley near Lebanon to Mount Halak, which goes up to Edom. Joshua gave land to the tribes of Israel for them to possess, ⁸as well as the hill country, the lowlands, the plain along the Jordan, the mountainsides, in the desert, and in the southern Judean wilderness, the land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹The kings that the Israelites conquered were those of the following cities: Jericho, Ai (which was near Bethel), ¹⁰Jerusalem, Hebron, ¹¹Jarmuth, Lachish, ¹²Eglon, Gezer, ¹³Debir, Geder, ¹⁴Hormah, Arad, ¹⁵Libnah, Adullam, ¹⁶Makkedah, Bethel, ¹⁷Tappuah, Hepher, ¹⁸Aphek, Lasharon, ¹⁹Madon, Hazor, ²⁰Shimron Meron, Akshaph, ²¹Taanach, Megiddo, ²²Kedesh, Jokneam in the Carmel area, ²³Dor in the Naphoth Dor area, Goyim in the region of Gilgal, ²⁴and Tirzah.

There was a total of thirty-one kings that the Israelite army defeated.

Chapter 13

¹When Joshua was very old, Yahweh said to him, "Joshua, you are now an old man, but there is still a lot of land for your army to capture. ²Here is a list of the lands that remain: The region of the Philistines and all those of the Geshurites, ³(from Shihor, which is located to the east of Egypt, and to Ekron in the north, the territory of the Canaanites; the five rulers of the cities of the Philistines, Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron—the territory of the Avvites). ⁴In the south, you must still capture the regions where the Canaan people groups live; and Arah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the boundary of the Amorites; ⁵the land of the Gebalite, all Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

⁶Still to capture are all the people who live in the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephothmaim, including all the people of the city of Sidon. I will drive them out before your army. Be sure to give that area to the Israelite people when you divide the land among them, as I gave you orders to do so. ⁷Divide all that land as an inheritance among the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh."

⁸Along with the half tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their possessions, because Moses, the man who served Yahweh well, had already assigned to them the land on the east side of the Jordan River.

⁹These lands stretched from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon Gorge (including the city that is located in the middle of the gorge), to all the plateau of Medeba, extending down as far as the city of Dibon. ¹⁰These lands also included the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, the king who had reigned in Heshbon, and they extended to the

border of the Ammonites; ¹¹Gilead, and the region of the Geshurites and Maacathites, including all of Mount Hermon, and all of the region of Bashan extending to the city of Salekah; ¹²all the kingdom of Og within the region of Bashan, he who reigned in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei (these are what was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); these people Moses had attacked with the sword and driven away. ¹³But the Israelites did not force out of Canaan the people of Geshur and the Maacathites. Instead, these people live with the Israelites even at the present time.

¹⁴The Levites received no assignment of lands; they were the only tribe that received no land. Moses gave them no possessions. Yahweh, the God of Israel, told them that the offerings given to himself would be their possession.

¹⁵Moses had allotted land to each clan in the tribe of Reuben. ¹⁶So their territory extended from Aroer, on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon River, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and includes the region of the plateau near Medeba. ¹⁷It also includes Heshbon and all its cities that are in the plateau including Dibon, and Bamoth Baal, and Beth Baal Meon; ¹⁸and Jahaz, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, ¹⁹and Kiriathaim, and Sibmah, and Zereth Shagar, which stands on a hill within the valley. ²⁰The territory also includes Beth Peor, the slopes of Mount Pisgah, Beth Jeshimoth, ²¹all the cities situated along the plateau, and all the kingdom of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who reigned there in Heshbon, the ones that Moses defeated along with the leaders of Midian, who were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon who ruled there. ²²The people of Israel killed with the sword Balaam son of Beor, the one who practiced divination. The people of Israel also killed with the sword many others at that same time. ²³The border of the people of the tribe of Reuben is the Jordan River. This was the inheritance given to the people of Reuben and assigned to all their clans. They lived there in their cities and villages.

²⁴Moses also gave land to the tribe of Gad, to the people of Gad, and allotted to each of their families the land they needed to live on. ²⁵They lived near Jazer, in all the cities of Gilead, and in half the land where the Ammonites lived, all the way to Aroer, which is a city east of Rabbah. ²⁶Their land extended from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, all the way to Mahanaim and to the region of Debir. ²⁷Their land was also in the valley: Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon, who had been king of Heshbon; his kingdom had bordered on the Jordan River and extended to the lower end of the Sea of Galilee, eastward beyond the Jordan River. ²⁸This is the inheritance of the people of Gad that was allotted to them according to the needs of their clans, along with the cities and villages where they lived.

²⁹Moses gave inheritance of land to the half tribe of Manasseh for them to live on. It was allotted to the half tribe of the people of Manasseh according to the needs of their clans. ³⁰Their territory was from Mahanaim, including all the region of Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan. There are sixty cities in the region. ³¹Their land also included half of the region of Gilead, as well as the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei (sometimes referred to as the royal cities of Og in Bashan). These were allotted to the people of Machir son of Manasseh, and that would include half the descendants of Machir, assigned to their clans according to their need.

³²These were the lands that Moses distributed to the people of Israel on the plains of Moab, when they were beyond the Jordan just east of Jericho. ³³But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance. Yahweh, who is the God of Israel, promised them that he would be their inheritance.

Chapter 14

¹Eleazar, the leader of all the priests, Joshua, and the leaders of the twelve tribes decided what land to allot to each of the Israelite tribes in Canaan. ²The assignments were made by casting lots for each one of the nine and one-half tribes. This was just as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do, so that the land could be assigned to each of the tribes and their clans. ³⁻⁴Now Moses had given land as a permanent possession to two and one-half tribes before Israel crossed over the Jordan River. But to the Levites he gave no inheritance; they were treated differently because of their priestly duties. No portion of the land was given to the Levites. They were, however, given cities in

which to live, including pastureland for their livestock so they could sustain their families. And the people of Joseph were divided into two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. ⁵The people of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses: They gave out portions of the land as permanent possessions.

⁶Some men from the tribe of Judah went to Joshua while he and all the Israelites were at Gilgal. Among those men was Jephunneh's son Caleb. He said to Joshua, "I am sure that you remember what Yahweh said to the prophet Moses concerning you and me when we were at Kadesh Barnea. ⁷I was forty years old at that time. Moses sent me from Kadesh Barnea and you and some other men to explore this land. When we returned, I gave to Moses a true report about what we had seen. ⁸The other men who went with us gave a report that caused the people to be afraid. But I fully followed Yahweh and obeyed everything he commanded us to do. ⁹Moses promised me, 'It is a firm promise that the land on which you walked will become yours as your permanent possession, to belong to you and your descendants forever. I am giving it to you because you obeyed Yahweh, my God, in everything you did.'

¹⁰Now Yahweh has done for me as he promised he would. Forty-five years have passed since Moses said that to me during the time that we were still in the wilderness. And just as Yahweh promised, he has kept me alive and well all during that time. Look at me! I am eighty-five years old. ¹¹I am as strong today as I was on the day that Moses sent me to explore this land. My strength is now as my strength was when I was young. I can wage war or I can travel far away and still have the strength to come home. ¹²So please give me the hill country that Yahweh promised to give to me on that day long ago. At that time, you heard me say that the Anakim lived there. You heard me say that their cities were large and that they had walls around them to protect them. But now, perhaps Yahweh will help me to drive them away with our army, just as Yahweh promised."

¹³So Joshua asked God to bless Caleb, the son of Jephunneh and he gave to Caleb the city of Hebron. ¹⁴In this way, Hebron became the permanent possession and the home of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. To this day his descendants live there because Caleb did everything that Yahweh, the God of Israel, told him to do. ¹⁵Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath Arba (Arba had been the greatest man among the Anakim). And there was peace in the land; they no longer waged war.

Chapter 15

¹The land that was assigned to the tribe of Judah was divided among its clans. Their land extended south to the wilderness of Sin at the border of Edom.

²Their south border of the land that was assigned to the tribe of Judah started at the end of the Salt Sea (also called the Dead Sea), from the bay that faces to the south. ³It then went southward and up the hill of Akkrabbim and continued along to Sin, and then it went up once more south of Kadesh Barnea, beside Hezron, up to Addar, and then it bent around to Karka. ⁴From there it continued past Azmon, and from there it ran beside the brook of Egypt; from there it turned west to the Mediterranean Sea. That will be your south border. ⁵The eastern border of the land of the tribe of Judah was the Dead Sea. It extended north to the end of the Jordan River, where it empties into the Dead Sea. ⁶The northern border continued from that point, and extended north to Beth Hoglah. From there it went further north of Beth Arabah to the Stone of Bohan (a stone that had been set up by Bohan, son of Reuben). ⁷From that point the border turned west and went through the Valley of Achor to Debir. From there it turned north again to go to Gilgal. Gilgal is north of the road that goes over the hill of Adummim, on the south side of the river valley. From Gilgal the border extended west to the springs at En Shemesh, and from there to En Rogel. ⁸From that point the border along the south shoulder of the Jebusite city (that is, Jerusalem). The boundary goes to the top of the hill on the west side of Valley of Hinnom, at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim. ⁹From there the border extended northwest to the top of the hills leading to the spring of Nephtoah, and from there to the cities near Mount Ephron. From there the border extended west toward Baalah (which is now named Kiriath Jearim). ¹⁰Then the border continued to extend west, past Baalah, to Mount Seir. Then it went southwest along the north side of Mount Jearim (which is also called Kesalon), and went down to Beth Shemesh. From there it passed by Timnah. ¹¹The border continued northwest to the hill north of Ekron. From there it extended west to Shikkeron and past Mount Baalah, on to Jabneel, and then northwest to the Mediterranean Sea.

¹²The western border of the land that was assigned to the tribe of Judah was the Mediterranean Sea. All the clans of Judah lived inside those borders.

¹³Yahweh commanded Joshua to give part of the land of the tribe of Judah to Caleb. So he gave to Caleb the city of Kiriath Arba, which is now called Hebron. (Arba was the father of Anak.) ¹⁴Caleb forced the three clans of the Anak people group to leave Hebron. Those were the Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai clans. ¹⁵Then Caleb left there and went to fight against the people who were living in Debir (which was previously named Kiriath Sepher). ¹⁶Caleb said, "If someone attacks the people in Kiriath Sepher and captures their city, I will give my daughter Aksah for him to marry." ¹⁷Othniel son of Caleb's brother Kenaz, captured the city. So Caleb gave his daughter, Aksah, for him to marry.

¹⁸When Caleb's daughter married Othniel, she told him to ask her father to give her a field. Then Aksah went to talk with her father Caleb. As she got down from her donkey, Caleb asked her, "Do you want something?"

¹⁹Aksah replied, "Yes, I want you to do something for me. You have given me the land of the southern Judean wilderness, but there is no water there. So please give me some land that has springs." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs near Hebron.

²⁰Here is a list of the towns in the land that God had promised to give to the tribe of Judah. Each clan was assigned some of the land.

²¹The tribe of Judah was assigned all these cities in the southern Judean wilderness, near the border of the region of Edom:

Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, ²²Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, ²³Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, ²⁴Ziph, Telem, and Bealoth. ²⁵Also Hazor Hadattah, Keriath Hezron (also called Hazor), ²⁶Amam, Shema, Molodah, ²⁷Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, ²⁸Hazar Shual, Beersheba, and Biziothiah. ²⁹Also Baalah, Iyim, Ezem, ³⁰Eltolad, Kesil, Hormah, ³¹Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, ³²Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. There were twenty-nine cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³³The tribe of Judah was assigned these cities in the northern part of the western foothills: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,

³⁴Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, ³⁵Jarmuth, Adullam, Sokoh, Azekah, ³⁶Shaaraim, Adithaim, and Gederah (also called Gederothaim). There were fourteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³⁷The tribe of Judah was also assigned these cities in the southern part of the western foothills: Zenan, Hadashah, Migdalgad, ³⁸Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, ³⁹Lachish, Bozkath, and Eglon. ⁴⁰Also Kabbon, Lahmas, Kitlish, ⁴¹Gederoth, Bethdagon, Naamah, and Makkedah.

There were sixteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁴²The tribe of Judah was also assigned these cities in the central part of the western foothills: Libnah, Ether, Ashan, ⁴³Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, ⁴⁴Keilah, Aczib, and Mareshah. There were nine cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁴⁵There was also the city of Ekron, with its surrounding towns and its villages. ⁴⁶From Ekron to the Mediterranean Sea, Judah's territory also included all the land near the city of Ashdod, including its villages.

⁴⁷Ashdod and its surrounding towns and villages; the city of Gaza and its surrounding towns and villages down to the brook of Egypt and to the Mediterranean Sea. The border followed the coastline.

⁴⁸The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the southwest part of the hill country: Shamir, Jattir, Sokoh, ⁴⁹Dannah, Kiriath Sannah (also called Debir), ⁵⁰Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, ⁵¹Goshen, Holon, and Giloh. There were eleven cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁵²The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the south central part of the hill country: Arab, Dumah, Eshan, ⁵³Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, ⁵⁴Humtah, Kiriath Arba (now called Hebron), and Zior. There were nine cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁵⁵The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the southeastern part of the hill country: Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, ⁵⁶Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, ⁵⁷Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah. There were ten cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁵⁸The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the central part of the hill country: Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, ⁵⁹Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon. There were six cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁶⁰The tribe of Judah was also assigned two towns in the northern part of the hill country, Rabbah and Kiriath Baal (which is also named Kiriath Jearim).

⁶¹The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the desert near the Dead Sea: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, ⁶²Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi. There were six cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁶³The army of the tribe of Judah was not able to drive out the Jebusites and so they stayed in Jerusalem. So today they are still living among the tribe of Judah.

Chapter 16

¹The land that was assigned to the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh—the tribes that were descended from Joseph—started at the Jordan River, going up from Jericho through the hill country of Bethel. ²It extended west from Jericho to Bethel, and then to Luz, and it passed on to Ataroth, which is the territory where the Archites live.

³From there it extended west to the border of the land where the Japhletites lived, and then west to the area near Lower Beth Horon. From there it continued west to Gezer, and from there to the Mediterranean Sea. ⁴This was the territory that the people of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received as their permanent possession. ⁵The border of the land that was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Ephraim started at Ataroth Addar in the east. It extended to Upper Beth Horon ⁶and continued to the Mediterranean Sea. From Mikmethath on the north it turned eastward toward Taanath Shiloh, and went on toward the east to Janoah. ⁷They went down from Janoah to Ataroth and then on to Naarah. From there it reached the city of Jericho, ending at the Jordan River. ⁸The northern border extended from Tappuah west to the ravine of Kanah, and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. This was the land that was assigned to all the clans of the tribe of Ephraim. ⁹Some of the cities and their dependant villages that were set apart for the people of Ephraim were actually within the assigned territory of the people of Manasseh.

¹⁰The people of the tribe of Ephraim could not force the Canaanites to leave Gezer. The Canaanites still live there. However, the people of Ephraim forced them to be their slaves.

Chapter 17

¹This is a list of the land that was allotted to the tribe of Manasseh. Manasseh's oldest son was Makir, and his grandson was Gilead. Their descendants were assigned the lands in the regions of Gilead and Bashan, in honor of Makir, who had been a great soldier. ²Land was also allotted to the other clans in the tribe of Manasseh: The clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida. These had been the names of Manasseh's male descendants (he himself had been a son of Joseph). Assignments of land were made for each clan.

³Now Zelophehad son of Hephher, a descendant of Gilead, who had been the son of Makir and grandson of Manasseh, had no sons. He had only daughters, and their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah.

⁴These women went to Eleazar (the leader of all the priests), and to Joshua and the other Israelite leaders. They said, "We want you to give us some land, because Yahweh told Moses that he should give to us some land, just as

you have given to the men in our tribe.” So Eleazar did what Yahweh had commanded: He assigned some land to them, just as he had done for their uncles. ⁵So the tribe of Manasseh eventually had ten sections of land west of the Jordan River and two sections on the east side of the Jordan River in Gilead and Bashan. ⁶And these women in the tribe of Manasseh also were assigned land on the west side of the river just like the men. The other parts of Gilead were assigned to the rest of the people of Manasseh.

⁷The land assigned to the tribe of Manasseh was between the land where the tribe of Asher lives and Mikmethath, near Shechem. The border extended south to the spring of Tappuah. ⁸The land near the city of Tappuah belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. But Tappuah itself was on the border with the tribe of Ephraim and in fact belonged to the Ephraimites. ⁹The border extended down south to the brook of Kanah, and all the cities south of that stream belonged to Manasseh. The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook of Kanah; it extended to the Mediterranean Sea. ¹⁰The land to the south belong to Ephraim and the land to the north belonged to the tribe of Manasseh; the Mediterranean Sea was Manasseh’s border. The tribe of Asher was on the north side of the boundary, while the tribe of Issachar was to the east.

¹¹But there were cities inside the territory assigned to the tribes of Issachar and Asher, that, along with their surrounding villages, were in fact assigned to people from the tribe of Manasseh. These cities were Beth Shan, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo (and the third city in the list is Napheth).

¹²The men of the tribe of Manasseh were not able to force the people who lived in those cities to leave, so the Canaanite people continued to live in their land. ¹³When the people of Israel grew strong they forced those Canaanites to work for them as slaves but they were not able to take their land away from them.

¹⁴The descendants of Joseph (that is, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) said to Joshua, “You have assigned to us only one area of land, but we have a great number of people in our tribes. In every way Yahweh has blessed us, so why did you give us only a small portion of land to live on?”

¹⁵Joshua replied to them, “Since you have a lot of people, go up and cut down the trees in the forest and make a place for your crops and for yourselves to live in the land of the Perizzites and the Raphaim. This is what you must do, since the hill country is too cramped for you to live there.”

¹⁶The people of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh replied, “The hill country is not big enough for us. But we cannot spread out into the plain because of the Canaanites who live on it. The Canaanites in Beth Shan and the surrounding villages have chariots with iron wheels.”

¹⁷Joshua replied to the house of Joseph, that is, to Ephraim and Manasseh; he said, “Your people are indeed very numerous and very powerful. So I will make one more assignment of land for you: ¹⁸the hill country will belong to you, too. You will have to cut down the trees in order to make it your own, and to make a place for you to live. You will drive out the Canaanites, even though they are strong and have chariots with iron wheels.”

Chapter 18

¹The entire assembly of the people of Israel met together at Shiloh. There they set up the tent where they worshiped Yahweh. There was no more war in the land. ²However, there seven tribes of Israel had not yet been assigned any land. ³Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Why are you waiting such a long time? How long are you going to delay going into the land that Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, has promised to give to you?”

⁴Choose three men from each of your seven tribes. I will send them out to explore the parts of the land which you have not occupied yet. When they finish, they will write a report to tell you what the land is like. They will also make a map to show you where cities and important places are located and which tribe will live in which area. ⁵They will divide the remaining land into seven parts. The tribe of Judah will keep its land in the south, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will keep their land in the north. ⁶But in their report, the men from the seven tribes should

describe the seven parts of the remaining land that they wish to receive, and bring the report to me. While Yahweh is watching, I will cast lots to decide which land should be assigned to each tribe. ⁷But the tribe of Levi will not be assigned any land, because their reward is to be Yahweh's priests. The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh have already been assigned their land on the east side of the Jordan River, just as Moses, the man who served God well, decided, so they will not get any more land."

⁸When the men who were chosen got ready to leave, Joshua told them, "Go and explore the land. Then write a report of what you have seen, and bring it back to me. Then while Yahweh is watching, I will cast lots here at Shiloh, to determine what area each tribe will receive." ⁹So the men left and walked through the area. Then they described in a scroll each of the seven parts into which they had divided the land, together with their cities. Then they returned to Joshua, who was still at Shiloh. ¹⁰After Joshua read their report at Shiloh, while Yahweh was watching, he cast lots to choose which land would be assigned to each of the seven Israelite tribes.

¹¹The first tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Benjamin. Each clan in that tribe was assigned some of the land that was between the area that was assigned to the tribe of Judah and the area that was assigned to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

¹²The northern border started at the Jordan River and extended west along the northern side of Jericho, into the hill country. From there the border extended west to the wilderness near Beth Aven. ¹³From there it extended south to Luz (which is now called Bethel). From there it goes down to Ataroth Addar, which is on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon.

¹⁴At the hill south of Beth Horon, the border turned and extended south to Kiriath Baal (which is also named Kiriath Jearim). That is a town where people of the tribe of Judah live. That was the western border.

¹⁵The south border of their land started near Kiriath Jearim and extended west to the springs of Nephtoah. ¹⁶From there it extended down to the bottom of the hill, near the Valley of Ben Hinnom, on the north side of the Valley of Rephaim. The border extended down along the Hinnom Valley, south of the city where the Jebusites lived, to En Rogel. ¹⁷From there the border extended west to En Shemesh and continued to Geliloth near the hill of Adummim. Then it extended to the great stone of Reuben's son Bohan. ¹⁸From there the border extended to the northern edge of Beth Arabah and down into the plain along the Jordan. ¹⁹From there it extended east to the northern edge of Beth Hoglah and ended at the north end of the Dead Sea, where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea. That was the boundary on the south.

²⁰The Jordan River was the eastern boundary of the land assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. Those were the boundaries of the land assigned to them, each border well described in turn.

²¹The cities in the land assigned to the tribe of Benjamin were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, ²²Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, ²³Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, ²⁴Kephar Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba. Altogether there were fourteen cities, not counting their villages.

²⁵The tribe of Benjamin also had the cities of Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, ²⁶Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, ²⁷Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, ²⁸Zelah, Haeleph, Jebus (the city where the Jebusites lived, which is now called Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath. Altogether there were fourteen cities, not counting their villages. All that area was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Benjamin.

Chapter 19

¹The second tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Simeon. Each clan in that tribe was assigned some land that was in the middle of Judah's territory.

²Simeon's land included the following cities: Beer Sheba, Sheba, Moladah, ³Hazarshual, Balah, Ezem, ⁴Eltolad, Bethul, and Hormah. ⁵Simeon's land also included the cities of Ziklag, Beth Markaboth. Hazarsusah, ⁶Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhén. There were thirteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁷The land assigned to Simeon also included the four cities of Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan, and their surrounding villages. ⁸They were also assigned some villages in an area that extended south to Baalath Beer (which is also called Ramah in the southern wilderness). That was the land assigned to the clans of the tribe of Simeon.

⁹The tribe of Judah had been assigned much more land than they needed, so part of their land was given to the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁰The third tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Zebulun. Each clan of that tribe was assigned some of the land.

The southern border started at Sarid. ¹¹It extended west to Maralah and on to Dabbesheth, and extended to the brook in front of the city of Jokneam. ¹²The border turned to the east from Sarid and went to the area near Chisloth Tabor and then on to Daberath, and farther on to Japhia. ¹³From there it extended east to Gath Hepher and Eth Kazin, and north to Rimmon. From there the border turned toward Neah. ¹⁴From Neah the border extended south to Hannathon and from there to the Valley of Iphtah El. ¹⁵Zebulun's area included the cities of Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem. Altogether there were twelve cities, together with their nearby villages.

¹⁶That was the land that was allotted to the clans of the tribe of Zebulun, including the cities and their surrounding villages.

¹⁷The fourth tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Issachar. Each of the clans of that tribe was assigned some of the land. ¹⁸Their land included the cities of Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem, ¹⁹Hapharaim, Shion, and Anaharath. ²⁰Issachar's land also included the cities of Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, ²¹Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pазzez. ²²The border of the area that was assigned to the tribe of Issachar was close to the cities of Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth Shemesh, and ended in the east at the Jordan River. Altogether there were sixteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

²³Those cities and surrounding villages were in the land assigned to the clans of the tribe of Issachar.

²⁴The fifth tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Asher. Each of the clans in that tribe was assigned some of the land.

²⁵Their land included the cities of Helkath, Hali, Beten, Akshaph, ²⁶Allammelek, Amad, and Mishal. The western border started at Mount Carmel and Shihorlibnath. ²⁷From there it extended southeast to the city of Bethdagon, and then to the area that was allotted to the tribe of Zebulun, and farther to the Valley of Iphtah El. From there the border extended east and then north to Beth Emek and Neiel and Kabul. ²⁸From there it extended west to the cities of Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, and continued to Sidon, which was a very large city. ²⁹From Sidon, the border extended south toward Ramah and to the very large city of Tyre that had strong walls around it. From there the border extended west to Hosah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea, in the region of Aczib, ³⁰Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob. Altogether there were twenty-two cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³¹Those cities and their villages were within the land that was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Asher.

³²The sixth tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Naphtali. Each of the clans in that tribe was assigned some of the land.

³³The border of Naphtali's land started in the west at the huge oak tree at Zaanannim, near the city of Heleph. It extended east through Adami Nekeb and Jabneel, then to Lakkum, and ended at the Jordan River. ³⁴The western boundary extended through Aznohtabor as far as Hukkok. It extended to the borders of the tribe of Zebulun at the south, to the border of the tribe of Asher on the west, and the to Jordan River to the east. ³⁵Within their land

were many cities with strong walls around them. These cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth, ³⁶Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, ³⁷Kedesh, Edrei, and Enhazor. ³⁸Naphtali's cities with strong walls also included Yiron, Migdal El, Horem, Bethanath, and Bethshemesh. Altogether there were nineteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³⁹Those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Naphtali.

⁴⁰The seventh tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Dan. Each of the clans in that tribe was assigned some of the land. ⁴¹Their land included the cities of Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, ⁴²Shaalabbin, Aijalon, and Ithlah. ⁴³Dan's land also included the cities of Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, ⁴⁵Jehud, Beneberak, Gath Rimmon, ⁴⁶Mejarkon, Rakkon, and the area near Joppa.

⁴⁷But the people of the tribe of Dan were unable to take control of the land that had been assigned to them. So they went northeast and fought against the people in the city of Leshem. They defeated and killed all those people. Then they settled down to live in Leshem, and changed the name of the city to Dan, the man from whom their tribe descended.

⁴⁸All of those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that was assigned to the clans in the tribe of Dan.

⁴⁹After the Israelite leaders had divided the land among the tribes, they also assigned some land to Joshua. ⁵⁰They assigned to him the city of Timnath Serah. Yahweh had said that he could have whatever city he wanted, and that was the city that he chose. It was in the hill country that had been assigned to the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua rebuilt the city and lived there.

⁵¹Those were the areas that were assigned to the various tribes of Israel. Eleazar (the leader of all the priests), Joshua, and the leaders of each tribe divided up the land while they were all at Shiloh, by casting lots to decide which area each tribe would receive. They did that while Yahweh was watching at the entrance of the sacred tent. In that way they completed dividing up the land.

Chapter 20

¹Then Yahweh said to Joshua, ²"Tell the Israelite people that they should choose some cities to which people can run in order to be safe, as I told Moses that you should do. ³If someone kills another person accidentally, without intending to kill that person, then he can run to one of these cities and be safe.

⁴When that person arrives at the gate of one of those cities, he must stop there and tell the leaders of the city what happened. If they believe him, they must allow him to enter the city, and they must give him a place to live among them. ⁵If some relative of the dead person comes to that city to get revenge, the leaders of that city must not allow the relative to take the killer, because what happened was accidental. He did not hate that person; he did not deliberately kill him. ⁶The person who killed someone else must stay in that city until the city judges put him on trial. Only if the judges decide that the person who has run to their city did not deliberately kill the other person will they allow him to stay in that city, and he must stay there until the high priest who was serving at the time of the offense dies. Then the man may safely go back to his own home."

⁷So the Israelites chose these cities to be cities to which people could run to be safe: Kedesh in the region of Galilee, in the hill country where the tribe of Naphtali lived; Shechem in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived; and Kiriath Arba (which is now called Hebron) in the hill country where the tribe of Judah lived; ⁸Bezer, on the east side of the Jordan River near Jericho, in the wilderness, where the tribe of Reuben lived; Ramoth in the region of Gilead, in the land where the tribe of Gad lived; and Golan in the region of Bashan, where the tribe of Manasseh lived. ⁹Any Israelite or any foreigner who lived among them, anyone who had killed someone accidentally, was allowed to run to one of those cities. There he would be safe from some relative of the person who died coming there and killing him to get revenge. He could stay in that city until he was put on trial to decide whether he was telling the truth when he said that he did not kill that person on purpose.

Chapter 21

¹The leaders of the clans of the Levites came to Shiloh to speak with Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the clans of the people of Israel. ²They said to them, "Yahweh commanded Moses that you should give us cities where we can live and where we can have pasture for our animals." ³So the Israelite leaders obeyed this command from Yahweh. They gave cities and pasturelands to the tribe of Levi out of their own lands that had been assigned to them.

⁴First Israelite leaders cast lots to assign some cities to the descendants of Kohath. These were clans that were the descendants of Aaron. They assigned thirteen cities in areas that the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin possessed. ⁵To the other clans descended from Kohath, Israelite leaders assigned ten cities in areas that the tribes of Ephraim and Dan possessed, as well as the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lives on the west side of the Jordan River.

⁶To the people in the clans descended from Gershon, Israelite leaders assigned thirteen cities the areas that the tribes of Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali possessed, as well as the half tribe of Manasseh in region of Bashan.

⁷To the people in the clans descended from Merari, the Israelite leaders assigned twelve cities in areas that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun possessed.

⁸In this way, the Israelite leaders gave cities and pasturelands to the tribe of Levi, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses that they should do.

⁹These are the names of the cities and surrounding pasturelands that the Israelite leaders assigned to the tribe of Levi in areas where the tribes of Judah and Simeon lived.

¹⁰First, the Israelite leaders assigned cities to certain clans descended from Kohath, the clans of Aaron's descendants, those in the tribe of Levi who served as priests. The Israelite leaders cast lots first for these clans descended from Kohath.

¹¹The Israelite leaders assigned to them Kiriath Arba (which is now called Hebron), in the hill country of Judah (Arba had been the father of Anak). They also gave the pasturelands around the city. ¹²However, the Israelite leaders had already assigned the cultivated fields and villages surrounding Kiriath Arba to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

¹³In this way, the Israelite leaders assigned Hebron to the descendants of Aaron the priest. Hebron was one of the cities to which people could run if they accidentally killed a person. To Aaron's descendants they also gave the cities of Libnah, ¹⁴Jattir with its pasturelands, and Eshtemoa with its pasturelands, ¹⁵They also gave Holon with its pasturelands, and Debir with its pasturelands, ¹⁶Ain, Juttah, and Bethshemesh—nine cities with all their pasturelands. These cities were located in the areas that the tribes of Judah and Simeon had possessed.

¹⁷The Israelite leaders also gave the descendants of Aaron some cities in the area that the tribe of Benjamin possessed: Gibeon, Geba, ¹⁸Anathoth, and Almon—four cities with all their pasturelands.

¹⁹Altogether there were thirteen cities with their surrounding pastureland that the Israelite leaders assigned to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

²⁰The other clans descended from Kohath received four cities in the area that the tribe of Ephraim possessed.

²¹To them were given Shechem with its pasturelands in the hill country of Ephraim, which was a city of refuge for anyone who killed a person unintentionally, and Gezer with its pasturelands, ²²Kibzaim, and Beth Horon—four cities with all their pasturelands.

²³These particular clans descended from Kohath also received four cities with their surrounding pasturelands in the area that the tribe of Dan possessed. These cities were Eltekeh, Gibbethon, ²⁴Aijalon, and Gath Rimmon—four cities with all their pasturelands.

²⁵These clans descended from Kohath also received two cities from the area that the tribe of Manasseh possessed. These cities were Taanach and Gath Rimmon—two cities with all their pasturelands.

²⁶There were ten cities in all, together with their surrounding pasturelands, that these particular clans descended from Kohath received.

²⁷The Israelite leaders also cast lots in order to assign cities and their surrounding pasturelands to the clans descended from Gershon. These clans were also descendants of Levi.

So these clans received two cities from the area the tribe of Manasseh received—that is, the half of the tribe that had settled down on the east side of the Jordan River. Those cities were Golan in the region of Bashan, which was one of the cities to which people could run, and Beeshtarah—two cities with their pasturelands.

²⁸These clans also received some cities from the area that the tribe of Issachar possessed. Those cities were Kishion, Daberath, ²⁹Jarmuth, and En Gannim—four cities with their pasturelands.

³⁰These clans received some cities from the area that the tribe of Asher possessed. These cities were Mishal, Abdon, ³¹Helkath, and Rehob—four cities with their pasturelands.

³²These clans received some cities from the area that the tribe of Naphtali possessed. These cities were Kedesh in the region of Galilee (one of the cities to which people could run if they killed a person unintentionally), Hammoth Dor, and Kartan—three cities with their pasturelands.

³³Altogether, therefore, the Gershonite received thirteen cities, together with their surrounding pasturelands.

³⁴The Israelite leaders also assigned cities to the rest of the Levites, that is, the people who belonged to the clans descended from Merari.

These clans received some cities in areas that the tribe of Zebulun possessed. These cities were Jokneam, Kartah, ³⁵Dimnah, and Nahalal—four cities with their pasturelands.

³⁶The clans descended from Merari also received cities in the area that the tribe of Reuben possessed. These cities were Bezer, Jahaz, ³⁷Kedemoth, and Mephaath—four cities with their pasturelands.

³⁸The clans descended from Merari also received cities in the area that the tribe of Gad possessed. These cities were Ramoth, which was one of the cities in Gilead to which people could run if they killed a person unintentionally, and Mahanaim. ³⁹There were also the cities of Heshbon, and Jazer—four cities in all, together with their pasturelands.

⁴⁰In all the clans descended from Merari received twelve cities because the Israelite leaders had cast lots for them.

⁴¹So the Levites received all together forty-eight cities from the areas that the other tribes of Israel possessed, as well as the pasturelands belonging to those cities. ⁴²These cities each had surrounding pastureland.

⁴³It was in this way that Yahweh assigned to the Israelite people all the land that he had promised to give to their ancestors. The Israelite people took control of these areas and settled down in them. ⁴⁴Just as he had promised their ancestors, Yahweh allowed them to have peace with the enemies that surrounded them. None of their enemies defeated them. Yahweh helped Israel defeat all their enemies. ⁴⁵Yahweh kept every promise he made to the Israelites. Every promise came true.

Chapter 22

¹Joshua then summoned the leaders of the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. ²He said to them, “You have done everything that Moses the servant of Yahweh, commanded you to do. You have also done what I

commanded you to do. ³For a long time you have helped the other tribes to defeat their enemies. You have obeyed everything that Yahweh your God taught you and commanded you to do. ⁴He promised to give peace to your fellow Israelites, and he has done what he promised. So now you may go back to your homes, to the land that Moses gave to you, on the east side of the Jordan River. ⁵Moses also commanded you to love Yahweh your God and to live your life as he wants you to live. He told you to obey his commands, to trust in him and to turn away from all others. Do this as you worship him and serve him by everything that you think and everything that you do.”

⁶Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, so they went back to their tents. ⁷Moses had given the region of Bashan, to the east of the Jordan River, to one-half of the tribe of Manasseh, and Joshua had given land on the west side of the Jordan River to the other half of that tribe. When Joshua sent them away to their tents, he asked God to bless them. ⁸He said to them, “Go back to your tents with much money with many animals and silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with many beautiful clothes. But you should share the plunder from your enemies with your brothers and sisters.”

⁹So the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh left the other people of Israel at Shiloh in the region of Canaan. They returned home to the region of Gilead, which belonged to them, because Moses had assigned it to them by Yahweh’s command.

¹⁰They arrived at the western bank of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan. There the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar—a very large and impressive altar. ¹¹The other people of Israel heard about this altar; they were concerned about what the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had built. It was an altar at the entrance to the land of Canaan. It was built at the city of Geliloth, near the Jordan, on the side that was part of the land of Israel. ¹²The people of Israel heard of this, and the whole assembly of the people came together at Shiloh. They decided to go to war against them because of this altar.

¹³But first, the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar and the leader of all the priests, to talk with the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. ¹⁴They also sent one leader from each of the ten tribes of Israel west of the Jordan River. Each of the leaders was an important leader in his own clan.

¹⁵Those leaders went to the region of Gilead to talk to the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. They said, ¹⁶“All the other Israelites are asking, ‘What is this you have done? You have disobeyed the commands of God. You have turned against Yahweh by building your own altar here in this place. You rebelled against the Yahweh. ¹⁷Have you forgotten about how Yahweh punished us at Peor, when we stopped worshiping him and began to worship other gods? Yahweh sent a deadly sickness among the people of Israel, and many died from it. ¹⁸Maybe you have built this altar because you have stopped worshiping Yahweh. If this is true, you have rebelled like this against him, and he will be angry with all the people of Israel.’

¹⁹“If you think that Yahweh considers your land here is not suitable for worshiping him, come back to our land, where Yahweh’s sacred tent is. We can share our land with you. But do not rebel against Yahweh or against us by building another altar for Yahweh our God. ²⁰Surely you remember what happened when Zerah’s son Achan refused to obey Yahweh’s command to destroy everything in Jericho? That one man disobeyed God’s command, but many other Israelites were punished for what he did.”

²¹The leaders of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh replied, ²²“Yahweh, the almighty God, knows why we did that, and we want you to know, too. If we have not been faithful to our promise to serve Yahweh, do not have any mercy on us, but take our lives. ²³If we have built this altar so we can stop obeying Yahweh, or if we have built this altar to offer sacrifices, grain offerings, or sacrifices to promise friendship with him, in violation of the law, may Yahweh punish us and even take our lives.

²⁴No, we built this altar because we were afraid that your children might speak to our children one day in the future and ask, ‘What have you to do with Yahweh, the God of Israel?’ ²⁵We are afraid that they will say to our children, “Yahweh made the Jordan River to be a boundary between us and you people of Reuben and you people of Gad. You have nothing to do with Yahweh.’ And your children might try to stop our children from worshiping Yahweh.

²⁶So we said, 'Let us now build an altar, but not for bringing sacrifices nor for any offerings. ²⁷Instead, we want it to be a monument to prove to you, to ourselves, and to all of our descendants after us, that we truly worship Yahweh. We indeed worship him by our burned sacrifices and our offerings, and our offerings to promise friendship with him. We built this altar so your descendants may never say to our descendants in the future, "Yahweh never gave you any portion of this land; you do not belong here."

²⁸In the future, if your descendants say that, our descendants can say, 'Look at the altar that our ancestors made! It is exactly like Yahweh's altar at Shiloh, but we do not burn sacrifices on it. It is a monument which means that we and you together worship Yahweh!' ²⁹We certainly do not want to rebel against Yahweh or stop doing what he desires. This altar was never intended to be used for the sacrifices, for burning flour offerings or for making other sacrifices. We know that there is only one true altar for Yahweh our God and that it is in front of the sacred tent."

³⁰When Phinehas the priest and the other ten leaders of the people of Israel heard what the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh said, they were pleased. ³¹So Phinehas said to them, "Now we know that Yahweh is with all of us Israelites, and that you were not rebelling against him when you built that altar. Because what you did did not break Yahweh's laws, we are sure that he will not punish us.

³²Then Phinehas and the Israelite leaders left the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad in the region of Gilead, and returned to Canaan. There they told the other Israelites what had happened. ³³They were pleased, and they thanked God. They did not talk anymore about fighting against the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and destroying everything in their land.

³⁴The people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad named their new altar "Reminder," and they said, "It is a reminder to us all that Yahweh is God."

Chapter 23

¹A long time later, by the time Yahweh had allowed the Israelites to live in peace, without fearing any longer any enemies, Joshua had become very old.

²Joshua called for all of Israel's elders and leaders, together with their judges and officers, to come and listen to him. When they arrived, he began to speak to them: "I am now very old. ³We have all seen what Yahweh our God has done to all the nations in this land. Yahweh our God has fought for us. ⁴I have given to you the nations that remain. Their lands will also be your permanent possession for the tribes of Israel, just as are the lands of the people groups that our people destroyed when I was leading them—all those other nations that the Israelites destroyed from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea when I was the leader. ⁵Yahweh your God will force those people out from their lands. He will capture their lands from them, in order that you might settle down in those lands. This is what he has promised to do for you.

⁶Pay careful attention so that you obey all that are written in the book of laws that Moses wrote down. Do not disobey them or change any of them. ⁷If you obey the law of Moses, you will not mix our people with those people groups. Do not even mention the names of their gods, and do use the names of their gods when you make promises or take oaths. Do not worship those gods or bow down to them. ⁸Love Yahweh and trust in him, as you have been doing. Do not stop worshiping him.

⁹Yahweh has forced many great and powerful nations to get out of your way as you advanced. No one has been able to stop you. ¹⁰Any single soldier among you will be able to cause a thousand men of war in the army of your enemy, to run away, because Yahweh your God fights for you. That is what he promised to do. ¹¹So do all you can to love Yahweh your God.

¹²However, if you stop doing what Yahweh desires; if you associate with those people groups who survived the wars with our people, or if you marry them and become their friends, and if they become friends with you, ¹³then you can be sure that Yahweh our God will not help you force them out of your land. They will become like traps that

will catch you. They will be like whips that strike your backs, and like thorns that will stick you in the eye. Your people group will become weaker and weaker until you die out in this land, this very good land that Yahweh our God has given to us.

¹⁴It is almost time for me to die, like everyone else does. You know deep within you, that every single thing that Yahweh promised to do for you, he has done it. ¹⁵He has given to you all the good things he promised. In the same way, the other things that he promised, things that are not good, will also happen if you do what is evil. In that case he will take your lives and your land away from you. ¹⁶If you do not obey the covenant between Yahweh and you, and if you leave him and go and worship other gods and bow down to them, Yahweh will become very angry with you, just as a fire starts from a spark. Very quickly he will take away your lives, and he will take away this good land from you, the same land he has now given to you.”

Chapter 24

¹Joshua brought together to the city of Shekem the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of the nation of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. ²Joshua said to all of them, “This is what Yahweh, the God we Israelite people worship, is saying: ‘Long ago, your ancestors, including Abraham’s father Terah and Abraham’s younger brother Nahor, lived far beyond the Euphrates River, where they worshiped other gods. ³But I took your ancestor Abraham from beyond the Euphrates River and I led him into the land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac. ⁴I gave Isaac his own sons, Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir as his own, but I sent Jacob and his children went down to Egypt, where they lived for many years.

⁵I sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Egypt, and I caused the people of Egypt to suffer many terrible plagues. After that, I brought your people out of Egypt. ⁶When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, they came to the sea. The Egyptian army pursued them with chariots and on horseback, as far as the Sea of Reeds.” ⁷Joshua continued to speak: “When you pleaded to Yahweh for help, he caused darkness to come between the nation of Israel and the Egyptian army, and he covered the Egyptian army with the waters of the sea so that your enemies were drowned. This is what Yahweh says: ‘You saw what I did in Egypt. You lived in the desert for many years.

⁸Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the east side of the Jordan River (the other side of the Jordan River from us here today). They fought against you, but I made you defeat them and destroy them; you captured their land. But I was the one who actually destroyed them, and I let you see everything that I did for you. ⁹Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, prepared his army and attacked Israel. He sent for Beor’s son Balaam, and he told him to call for a curse from Yahweh on your people. ¹⁰But I would not listen to Balaam. Instead, I made him bless you, and I saved you from his curse.

¹¹Then you all crossed the Jordan River and came to Jericho. The leaders of Jericho fought against you, as did the armies of the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. I made all of you more powerful than they were, and you defeated them all. ¹²I am the one who caused them to panic. They acted as if they were being chased by hornets. And you drove out the two kings of the Amorites as your army moved ahead and pushed them away. But it was not because of your swords or your bows and arrows, but it was because that I, Yahweh, was fighting on your side. ¹³So I gave you a land that you had not cleared or plowed, and I gave you cities that you did not build. Now you live in those cities, and you eat the grapes from grapevines that you did not plant, and you eat olives from trees that you did not plant.’

¹⁴Joshua continued to speak: “Now be afraid and be in awe of Yahweh. Worship him sincerely, and be faithful when you make promises to him. Throw away the idols that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the far side of the Euphrates River, and when they lived in Egypt. Worship Yahweh alone. ¹⁵If you do not want to worship Yahweh, then decide today what gods you will worship. In that case, you must decide whether you will worship the gods of your ancestors, the gods that they worshiped when they lived on the other side of the Euphrates River, or whether you will worship the gods of the Amorites, the gods that those people worshiped in this land where you now live. But as for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh.”

¹⁶The Israelite people answered, "We will always worship Yahweh! We promise that we will never worship or bow down to any other gods! ¹⁷It was Yahweh who brought our ancestors up out of Egypt. He rescued us from that land, where they were slaves. We saw him perform great miracles, and he protected us when we were traveling. He protected us wherever we went; he kept us safe from the armies of many kings. We became a great nation, and we have entered this land. ¹⁸Yahweh drove out all the people before us. He defeated the Amorites, who lived in the land. So we will worship and bow down to Yahweh, for he is our God."

¹⁹But Joshua replied to the people, "You cannot serve Yahweh! He is a holy God, and he will not allow you to worship other gods. He will not forgive you for breaking his laws, or when you sin, ²⁰if you forsake Yahweh and worship other gods. If you forget him, he will turn and do the same harm to you as he did to your enemies, and he will burn you as with fire! He will do all this to, after he has been so good to you—if you turn your back on him and leave him." ²¹But the people answered Joshua, "No, we will worship Yahweh."

²²Then Joshua said, "You are bearing witness to what you have said. You have chosen Yahweh and you are promising to worship him alone." They replied, "Yes, that is what we promise to do." ²³Then Joshua said, "You must throw away all the other idols you have with you, and with all the strength you have within you, you must turn to Yahweh and worship him as your God, and no other." ²⁴The people replied, "We will worship Yahweh, our God, and we will obey him alone."

²⁵On that same day, Joshua made a covenant with the people. There at Shechem, he wrote down for them all the decrees and laws that Yahweh commanded them to obey. ²⁶He wrote down all the words that were in the book of the law of God. He took a great stone and set it up there at Shechem, under the large oak tree that grew beside the place where they worshiped Yahweh. ²⁷Joshua said to all the people, "Look! This stone will bear testimony against us. This is the place where we promised that we would serve Yahweh. This stone will be a place to remember our promise to Yahweh, and a place to remind us of what will happen to us if we do not keep our promise to God."

²⁸Then Joshua sent the people away, and they went to the places that were assigned to them.

²⁹After these things happened, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died. He was 110 years old when he died. ³⁰They buried his body on his own property in Timnathserah. It is in the north hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ³¹The people of Israel worshiped Yahweh as long as the elders who had served with Joshua were alive; they had seen everything that Yahweh had done for Israel. ³²Joseph's bones, which the people of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob had bought long ago for the price of one hundred pieces of silver. He had bought it from Hamor, the father of Shechem. That piece of land became a permanent possession for Joseph's descendants. ³³Eleazar son of Aaron, also died. They buried his body at Gibeah, the city that belonged to Phinehas, his son, in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges

Chapter 1

¹After Joshua died, the Israelite people asked Yahweh, "Which of our tribes should attack the Canaanites first?"

²Yahweh replied, "The men of the tribe of Judah must attack first. I will enable the tribe of Judah to defeat the Canaanites."

³The men of Judah went to their fellow Israelites, the men from the tribe of Simeon, and said to them, "Come and help us to fight the Canaanites in order that we can take from them the land that Yahweh allotted to us. If you do that, we will go with you and help you conquer the people in the land that Yahweh promised to give to you." So the men from the tribe of Simeon went with the men of the tribe of Judah.

⁴When the men of those two tribes attacked, Yahweh enabled them to defeat ten thousand men of the Canaanites and the Perizzites at the city of Bezek. ⁵During the battle they found Adoni-Bezek, the leader of the city. ⁶Adoni-Bezek tried to run away. The Israelites pursued him and caught him. Then they cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

⁷Adoni-Bezek said, "My army captured seventy kings. We cut off their thumbs and big toes. After that, we forced those kings to eat scraps that fell from our table. Now God has paid me back for what I did." Then the men of Judah took Adoni-Bezek to Jerusalem, and he died there.

⁸The army of Judah fought against the men of Jerusalem, and they captured the city. With their swords they killed the people who lived there and they burned the houses in the city.

⁹Later, the men of Judah went down to fight the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the southern Judean wilderness, and in the foothills to the west. ¹⁰The men of Judah also went to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the city of Hebron (which used to be named Kiriath Arba). They defeated the armies of kings Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

¹¹Then they left that area and went to fight against the people living in the city of Debir, which was previously named Kiriath Sepher. ¹²Before they attacked the city, Caleb said to them, "The person who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher, I will allow him to marry my daughter Aksah." ¹³Othniel, who was the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz, captured the city. So Caleb gave his daughter Aksah to him, to become his wife.

¹⁴After Aksah married Othniel, she asked him to request her father to give him a field. Then she rode back to her father Caleb's house on her donkey. When she got off the donkey, Caleb asked her, "What do you want?"

¹⁵She replied, "I want you to do a favor for me. You have given me the land of the southern Judean wilderness, but it is very dry there. So please also give me some land that has springs of water." So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring, and some land on lower ground that had a spring in it.

¹⁶The Kenites who were descendants of Moses' father-in-law left Jericho, which was called "The City of Palm Trees." They went with some of the men of Judah to live with them in the southern Judean wilderness, near the city of Arad.

¹⁷The men of Judah and their fellow Israelites from the tribe of Simeon defeated the Canaanites who lived in the city of Zephath. They completely destroyed the city and gave it a new name, Hormah, which means "complete destruction." ¹⁸The men of Judah also captured Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron cities and all the land that is near those cities. ¹⁹Yahweh helped the men of Judah to capture the hill country, but they could not force the people who were living in the plains to leave, because they had better weapons—they had iron chariots.

²⁰The city of Hebron was given to Caleb because Moses had promised him that he could have that city. And Caleb forced the three clans descended from Anak to leave that area. ²¹But the tribe of Benjamin could not force the Jebusites to leave Jerusalem. So, since that time the Jebusites have lived in Jerusalem with the tribe of Benjamin.

²²The men of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went to fight against the men of the city of Bethel, and Yahweh helped them. ²³They sent some spies to find out everything that they could find out about Bethel, which was previously called Luz. ²⁴The spies saw a man who was coming out of the city. They said to him, "If you show us a way to get into the city, we will be kind to you and we will not kill you." ²⁵So the man showed them a way to enter the city. The men of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh entered the city and killed all the people with their swords, but they did not kill the man who showed them how to get into the city, and they did not kill his family. ²⁶That man went to the area where the descendants of Heth lived, and he built a city. He named the city Luz, and that is still the name of that city.

²⁷There were Canaanites who lived in Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo cities and in the surrounding villages. The men of the tribe of Manasseh did not force them to leave those towns, because the Canaanites were determined to stay there. ²⁸Later, the Israelites became stronger, and they forced the Canaanites to work for them as their slaves, but they did not force all the Canaanites to leave their land. ²⁹The men of the tribe of Ephraim did not force the Canaanites to leave the city of Gezer. So the Canaanites continued to live with the tribe of Ephraim.

³⁰The men of the tribe of Zebulun did not force the Canaanites who were living in the cities of Kitron and Nahalol to leave. They stayed there and lived with the tribe of Zebulun, but the people of Zebulun forced them to work for them as their slaves. ³¹The men of the tribe of Asher did not force the Canaanites who lived in Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek and Rehob cities to leave. ³²So the tribe of Asher lived with the Canaanites (those who were still there), and did not make them leave. ³³The men of the tribe of Naphtali did not compel the people who lived in the cities of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath to leave, so they continued to live with the Canaanites in those cities, but the Canaanites were forced to work as the slaves of the tribe of Naphtali. ³⁴The Amorites forced the tribe of Dan to live in the hills. They did not allow them to come down and live on the plain. ³⁵The Amorites were determined to stay at Mount Heres and in the cities of Aijalon and Shaalbim. But when the Israelites became stronger, they forced the Amorites to work as their slaves. ³⁶The land where the Amorites lived extended from Scorpion Pass toward the west beyond Sela, up into the hill country.

Chapter 2

¹The angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to a place that the people of Israel would soon call Bokim. He said to the Israelite people, "I brought your ancestors up here from Egypt. I led them into this land that I solemnly promised to give to your ancestors. I said to them, 'I will never break the covenant I made with you. ²But as for you, you must never agree to have peace with the people who live in this land. You must tear down the altars where they make sacrifices to idols.' But you have not obeyed me. ³So now, I am telling you that I will not drive out your enemies as you advance. They will be like thorns in your sides. And they will try to trap you by persuading you to worship their idols."

⁴After he said that to all the Israelites, the people lamented loudly. ⁵They named that place Bokim, which means "weeping." There they offered sacrifices to Yahweh.

⁶After Joshua sent the people of Israel away, each group went to possess the land that had been permanently assigned to them. ⁷They obeyed Yahweh as long as Joshua was alive, and as long as the elders, those who had seen all the great things that Yahweh had done for Israel, were alive.

⁸Then Yahweh's servant Joshua died. He was 110 years old when he died. ⁹They buried his body in the land that he had received from Moses, at Timnath Heres, in the area where the descendants of Ephraim lived, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰After all the people who lived at the same time as Joshua died, more people grew up who did not know Yahweh and had not seen him do the great things he had done for the Israelite people. ¹¹⁻¹³They did things that Yahweh said were very evil. They worshiped idols that represented the god Baal and the female fertility goddess, the Ashtoreth. They worshiped the various gods that the people groups around them worshiped. They stopped worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors worshiped, the one who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt. This caused Yahweh to be very angry. ¹⁴Because Yahweh was angry, he allowed people from other groups to attack them and steal their crops and animals. They were no longer able to resist their enemies, and Yahweh allowed all their enemies around them to defeat them. ¹⁵Whenever the Israelites went to fight their enemies, Yahweh always worked against them and allowed their enemies to defeat them, just as he had said he would do. So the Israelites were greatly distressed.

¹⁶Then Yahweh brought leaders to them. These leaders rescued the Israelites from the people who were attacking them. ¹⁷But the Israelites still would not obey their leaders. Instead, they betrayed Yahweh for idols, like prostitutes to other gods and they worshiped those idols. They were not like their ancestors. Their ancestors obeyed what Yahweh commanded, but these new people quickly stopped behaving as their ancestors had behaved. ¹⁸Whenever Yahweh brought a leader to them, he helped that leader and enabled him to rescue the people from their enemies. He did that as long as that leader was alive. Yahweh pitied them as they groaned because they were being oppressed and caused to suffer. ¹⁹But after that leader died, the people always began behaving in more evil ways than their ancestors had behaved. They worshiped other gods and bowed down to them and did all the things that they thought those gods wanted them to do.

²⁰So Yahweh was very angry with the Israelite people. He said, "These people have disobeyed the covenant that I made with their ancestors. They have not done what I told them to do. ²¹So I will no longer expel the people groups that Joshua left in this land when he died. ²²I will use them to test the Israelite people to see whether they will do what I want them to do, as their ancestors did." ²³Yahweh allowed these people groups to stay in that land for a long time after the people of Israel had come. He did not expel them by allowing Joshua and his men to defeat them.

Chapter 3

¹At that time there were still many people groups in Canaan. Yahweh left them there to test the Israelite people because many of the Israelites in Canaan had not fought in any of the previous wars. ²So Yahweh did this to teach the new generation of Israelites how to wage war. ³This is a list of the people groups that Yahweh left there to test the Israelites: The Philistines and their five leaders, the people living in the area near the city of Sidon, the descendants of Canaan, and the Hivites who were living in the mountains of Lebanon between Mount Baal Hermon and Lebo Hamath ("the pass of Hamath"). ⁴Yahweh left these people groups there to test the Israelites, to see if they would obey his commands which he had told Moses to give them. ⁵The Israelites lived among the people groups of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁶But the Israelites took the daughters of those people to be their own wives, and gave their own daughters to those men to marry them. And they worshiped the gods of those people.

⁷The Israelites did things that Yahweh said were very evil. They forgot about Yahweh, their God, and they started to worship the idols that represented the god Baal and the goddess Asherah. ⁸Therefore Yahweh was very angry with Israel, and he handed them over that they might live under the power of King Cushan-Rishathaim, who was king of Aram Naharaim in Mesopotamia. The people of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim for eight years. ⁹But when they pleaded to Yahweh to help them, he brought a leader to rescue them. He was Othniel (the son of Caleb's younger brother, Kenaz). ¹⁰Yahweh's Spirit gave him power and insight, and he became their leader. He led an army that fought against the army of Cushan-Rishathaim, and Othniel defeated them. ¹¹After that, for forty years there was peace in the land, until Othniel died.

¹²After that, the Israelites again did things that Yahweh had forbidden them to do, things that were very evil. Yahweh made the army of King Eglon, who ruled the land of Moab, much stronger so that he could defeat the

Israelites. ¹³Eglon persuaded the leaders of the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join their armies with his army to attack Israel. They captured Jericho, which was called "The City of Palm Trees." ¹⁴Then King Eglon ruled the Israelites for eighteen years.

¹⁵But then the Israelites again pleaded to Yahweh to help them. So he brought another leader to rescue them. He was Ehud son of Gera, a left-handed man from the descendants of Benjamin. The Israelites sent him to King Eglon to give him the money he required every year so he would not attack them. ¹⁶Ehud had with him a short double-edged sword, one-half meter in length. He hid it under his clothes by strapping the sword to his right thigh. ¹⁷He gave the money to King Eglon, who was a very fat man. ¹⁸Then Ehud started to go back home with the men who had carried the money. ¹⁹When they arrived at the stone quarries near Gilgal, he told the other men to go on, but he himself turned around and went back to the king of Moab. When he arrived at the palace, he said to the king, "Your majesty, I have a secret message for you." So the king told all his servants to be quiet, and he sent them out of the room.

²⁰Then, as Eglon was sitting alone in the upstairs room of his summer palace, Ehud came close to him and said, "I have a message for you from God." Just then the king got up from his chair. ²¹As the king got up, Ehud reached with his left hand and pulled the dagger from his right thigh, and plunged it into the king's belly. ²²He thrust it in so far that the handle went into the king's belly. Ehud did not pull the dagger out. He left it there, with the handle buried in the king's fat, and he went out from the room. ²³Then Ehud left the room. He went out to the porch. He shut the doors to the room and locked them.

²⁴After he had gone, King Eglon's servants came back, but they saw that the doors of the room were locked. They said, "The king must be defecating in the inner room." ²⁵So they waited, but when the king did not open the doors of the room, after a while they were worried. They got a key and unlocked the doors. And they saw that their king was lying on the floor, dead.

²⁶Meanwhile, Ehud escaped. He passed by the stone quarries and arrived at Seirah, in the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived. ²⁷There he blew a trumpet to tell everyone that the people should join him to fight the people of Moab. So the Israelites went with him from the hills. They went down toward the Jordan River, with Ehud leading them.

²⁸He said to the men, "Yahweh is going to allow us to defeat your enemies, the people of Moab. So follow me!" So they followed him down to the river, and they stationed some of their men at the place where people can walk across the river, in order that they could kill any people from Moab who tried to cross the river to escape. ²⁹At that time, the Israelites killed about ten thousand people from Moab. They were all strong and capable men, but not one of them escaped. ³⁰On that day, the Israelites conquered the people of Moab. Then there was peace in their land for eighty years.

³¹After Ehud died, Shamgar became their leader. He rescued the Israelites from the Philistines. In one battle he killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad.

Chapter 4

¹After Ehud died, the Israelites again started doing things Yahweh said were very evil. ²So he allowed the army of Jabin, one of the kings in the region of Canaan, who ruled in the city of Hazor, to conquer the Israelites. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth (where many of those who were not Israelites lived).

³Sisera's army had nine hundred chariots made out of iron. For twenty years he cruelly oppressed the Israelites. Then they pleaded to Yahweh to help them.

⁴Now Deborah, a woman who proclaimed the word of Yahweh (who was the wife of Lappidoth), was a leading judge in Israel at that time. ⁵She would sit under her palm tree (they called it the "palm of Deborah") at a place between Ramah and Bethel, in the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and people would come to

her and ask her to settle their legal disputes. She would determine what was right and fair. ⁶One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam and called him to come to her. He was from Kedesh (in the area where the descendants of Naphtali lived). She said to him, "This is what Yahweh, the God we worship, is commanding you to do: 'Take ten thousand men with you, some from Naphtali and some from Zebulun, and gather all your men together at Mount Tabor. ⁷Yahweh will make me able to persuade Sisera, the commander of King Jabin's army, to come with his chariots and his army, to the river Kishon, a few miles away. I will enable your men to defeat them there.'"

⁸Barak replied, "I will go only if you go with me. If you will not go with me, I will not go."

⁹She replied, "Indeed I will go with you. But because that is what you have decided to do, Yahweh will enable a woman to defeat Sisera, and the result will be that no one will honor you for doing that." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰There he summoned men from Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men came to him there, and then they went together with Deborah to Mount Tabor.

¹¹At that time Heber (the Kenite) had moved away from the Kenites with his wife Jael, and set up his tent near the big oak tree at Zaanannim, near Kedesh. (Heber was a descendant of Moses' father-in-law Hobab.)

¹²Someone told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up on Mount Tabor with an army. ¹³Sisera gathered his troops with their nine hundred chariots, and they marched from Harosheth (where the non-Israelites lived) to the river Kishon.

¹⁴Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get going! This is the day that Yahweh will enable your army to defeat the army of Sisera. Yahweh is going ahead of you!" So Barak led his men as they descended from Mount Tabor. ¹⁵As they advanced, Yahweh caused Sisera and all his chariots and his army to have great difficulty maneuvering around. So Sisera jumped down from his chariot and ran away. ¹⁶But Barak and his men pursued the other chariots and the enemy soldiers as far as Harosheth (where the non-Israelites lived). They killed all of the men in Sisera's army. Not one man survived.

¹⁷But Sisera ran to Jael's tent. He did that because Sisera's master, Jabin of the city of Hazor, was a good friend of her husband Heber.

¹⁸Jael went out to greet Sisera. She said to him, "Sir, come into my tent! Do not be afraid!" So he went into the tent and lay down, and she covered him with a blanket.

¹⁹He said to her, "I am thirsty; can you give me some water?" So she opened a leather container of milk, and gave him a drink. Then she covered him with a blanket again.

²⁰He said to her, "Stand in the entrance of the tent. If someone comes and asks, 'Is anyone else here?', say 'No'."

²¹Sisera was very exhausted, so he soon was asleep. While he was sleeping, Jael crept quietly to him, holding a hammer and a tent peg. She pounded the peg through his skull, and she hammered the peg all the way through his head and it stuck into the ground, and he died.

²²When Barak came to Jael's tent to look for Sisera, she went out to greet him. She said, "Come in, and I will show you the man you are searching for!" So he followed her into the tent, and he saw Sisera lying there, dead, with the tent peg still piercing through his head.

²³On that day God enabled the Israelites to defeat the army of Jabin, one of the kings of the Canaanites. ²⁴The Israelites became stronger and stronger, and they destroyed Jabin and his army.

Chapter 5

¹On that day, Deborah and Barak (the son of Abinoam) sang this song:

²When the leaders of the Israelite people really lead them, and the people willingly follow them, it is time to praise Yahweh!

³Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you leaders!

I will sing to Yahweh. With this song I will praise Yahweh, the God of Israel.

⁴O Yahweh, when you came from Seir, when you marched from that land, also known as Edom,
the earth shook,
and rain poured down from the skies.

⁵The mountains shook when you came,
just like Mount Sinai shook when you appeared there,
because you are Yahweh,
the God of Israel.

⁶When Shamgar was our leader and in the days of Jael,
we were afraid to walk on the main roads;
instead, caravans of travelers walked on winding, less traveled roads
to avoid being molested.

⁷People left their small villages, and moved into the walled cities
until I, Deborah, became their leader.

I became like a mother to the Israelite people. ⁸When the Israelite people abandoned Yahweh and chose new gods,
enemies attacked the gates of the cities,
and then they took away the shields and spears from forty thousand Israelite soldiers.
Not one was left with a metal weapon.

⁹I am thankful for the leaders and soldiers who volunteered to fight.
I praise you, Yahweh, for them!

¹⁰You wealthy people who ride on donkeys,
sitting on nice padded saddles,
and you people who just walk on the road,
think about all this!

¹¹Listen to the voices of the singers who gather at the places where the animals drink water.
They tell about how Yahweh acted righteously
when he enabled the Israelite warriors to conquer their enemies.
Yahweh's people marched down to the city gates.

¹²The people came to my house and shouted,
'Deborah, wake up! Wake up and start singing!'

They also shouted,
'Barak (son of Abinoam), get up, and capture our enemies!'

¹³Later, some of the Israelite people who survived the battle
came down from the highlands to where their leaders were.
These were men who belonged to Yahweh and they came down to me
to fight their enemies alongside these warriors.

¹⁴Some came from the tribe descended from Ephraim.
They came from land that once belonged to the descendants of Amalek.
Men from the tribe descended from Benjamin followed them.
Troops from the group descended from Machir also came down,
and officers from the tribe descended from Zebulun came down, carrying staffs to show they were important.

¹⁵Leaders from the tribes descended from Issachar joined Barak and Deborah.
They followed Barak, rushing down into the valley.
But men from the tribe descended from Reuben could not decide what they should do.

¹⁶Why did you men stay at your fireplaces,
waiting to hear the shepherds whistle for their flocks of sheep to come to the pens?
Men in the tribe descended from Reuben could not decide
whether they would join us to fight our enemies, or not.

¹⁷Similarly, the men living in the Gilead area stayed at home, east of the Jordan River.
And the men from the tribe descended from Dan,
why did they stay home?
The tribe descended from Asher sat by the seashore.
They stayed in their coves.

¹⁸But men from the tribe descended from Zebulun risked their lives on the battlefield,
and men descended from Naphtali were ready to do that, also.

¹⁹The kings of Canaan fought us at Taanach, near the springs in Megiddo Valley.
But since they did not defeat us,
they did not carry away any silver or other treasures from the battle.

²⁰It was as though the stars in the heavens fought for us

and as though those stars in their paths fought against Sisera.

²¹The river Kishon swept them away—

that river that has been there for ages.

I will tell myself to be brave and continue marching on.

²²The hooves of the horses of Sisera's army pounded the ground.

Those powerful horses kept galloping along.

²³The angel sent by Yahweh said,

'I curse the people of the town of Meroz

because they did not come to help Yahweh

to defeat the mighty warriors of Canaan.'

²⁴But God is very pleased with Jael,

(the wife of Heber the Kenite).

He is more pleased with her than with all the other women who live in tents.

²⁵Sisera asked for some water,

and Jael gave him some milk.

She brought him some yogurt in a bowl that was suitable for kings.

²⁶Then, when he was asleep, she reached for a tent peg with her left hand,

and she reached for a hammer with her right hand.

She hit Sisera hard with it and crushed his head.

She pounded the tent peg right through his head.

²⁷He collapsed at her feet

and he fell and he layed there and did not move.

At her feet he sank down,

and there he fell limp. He was dead.

²⁸Sisera's mother looked out from her window.

She said, 'Why is he taking so long to come home in his chariot?

Why do I not hear the sound of the wheels of his chariot?'

²⁹Her wisest princesses replied to her,

and she kept consoling herself by repeating those words:

³⁰Perhaps they are dividing up the things and the people they captured after the battle.

Each soldier will get one or two women who will bear them children.

Sisera will get some beautiful robes,
and some beautiful embroidered robes for me.'

³¹But that is not what happened! Yahweh, I hope that all your enemies will die as Sisera did!

And I desire that all those who love you, Yahweh, be as strong as the sun when it rises!"

There was peace again in the land for forty years.

Chapter 6

¹Again the Israelites did what Yahweh said was very evil. So he allowed the people of Midian to conquer them and rule them for seven years. ²The people of Midian treated the Israelites so cruelly that the Israelites fled to the mountains. There they made places to live in caves and places to be safe. ³At the time when the Israelites planted their crops in the fields, the people of Midian and Amalek and people from the east attacked the Israelites. ⁴They set up tents in the area, and then destroyed the crops as far south as Gaza. They did not leave anything for the Israelites to eat and took away the sheep, the cattle and the donkeys. ⁵They came into Israel with their tents and their livestock like a swarm of locusts. There were so many of them that arrived riding on their camels that no one could count. They stayed so they could ruin the Israelites' livelihoods. ⁶The people of Midian took almost everything the Israelites owned. So finally the Israelites pleaded for Yahweh to help them.

⁷When the Israelites pleaded with Yahweh to help them because of what the people from Midian had done to them, ⁸Yahweh sent to them a prophet, who said, "This is what Yahweh the God of Israel says, 'I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, out of the places where you all were slaves. ⁹But I rescued them from the leaders of Egypt and from all the others who oppressed you. I expelled their enemies from this land, and gave it to you. ¹⁰I told you and your ancestors, 'I am Yahweh, your God. You are now in the land of the Amorites, but you must not worship the gods they worship here in this land in which you are living.' But you did not obey me.'"

¹¹One day the angel of Yahweh appeared and sat under a big oak tree at the town of Ophrah. (That tree belonged to Joash, who was from the clan of Abiezer.) Joash's son Gideon was threshing wheat in the pit where they pressed grapes to make wine. He was threshing the grain there in order to hide it from the people of Midian. ¹²Yahweh went over to Gideon and said to him, "You mighty warrior, Yahweh is helping you!"

¹³Gideon replied, "Sir, if Yahweh is helping us, why have all these bad things happened to us? We heard about all the miracles that Yahweh performed for our ancestors. We heard people tell us about how he rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. But now Yahweh has abandoned us, and we are ruled by the people from Midian."

¹⁴Then Yahweh turned toward him and said, "You have the strength to rescue the Israelites from the people of Midian. I am sending you to do that!"

¹⁵Gideon replied, "But Lord, how can I rescue the Israelites? My clan is the least significant in the whole tribe descended from Manasseh, and I am the least significant person in my whole family!"

¹⁶Yahweh said to him, "I will help you. So you will defeat the Midianite army as easily as if you were fighting only one man!"

¹⁷Gideon replied, "If you are truly pleased with me, do something which will prove that you who are speaking to me are really Yahweh. ¹⁸But do not go away until I go and bring back an offering to you."

Yahweh answered, "Very well, I will stay here until you return."

¹⁹Gideon hurried to his home. He killed a young goat and cooked it. Then he took a about twenty-two liters of flour and baked some bread without yeast. Then he put the cooked meat in a basket, and put the broth from the meat in a pot, and took it to Yahweh, who was sitting under the tree.

²⁰Then the angel of God said to him, "Put the meat and the bread on this rock. Then pour the broth on top of it." So Gideon did that. ²¹Then Yahweh reached out and touched the meat and bread with the walking stick that was in his hand. A fire flamed up from the rock and burned up the meat and the bread that Gideon had brought! And then Yahweh disappeared. ²²When Gideon realized that it was really Yahweh who had appeared in the form of an angel and talked with him, he exclaimed, "O, Yahweh, I have seen you face-to-face when you had the form of an angel! So I will surely die!"

²³But Yahweh called to him and said, "Do not be afraid! You will not die!"

²⁴Then Gideon built an altar to worship Yahweh there. He named it 'Yahweh is Peace.' That altar is still there at the town of Ophrah, in the land of the Abiezrites.

²⁵That night Yahweh said to Gideon, "Take the second-best bull that belongs to your father, the bull that is seven years old, and tear down the altar that your father built to worship the god Baal. Also cut down the pole for worshiping the goddess Asherah that is there beside it. ²⁶Then build a stone altar to worship me, your God Yahweh, here on this hill. Take the wood from the Asherah pole you cut down and make a fire to burn the meat of the bull as a burnt offering to me."

²⁷So Gideon and ten of his servants did what Yahweh commanded. But they did it at night, because he was afraid what the other members of his family and the other men in town would do to him if they found out that he had done that.

²⁸Early the next morning, as soon as the men got up, they saw that the altar to Baal was in ruins, and the Asherah pole was gone. They saw that there was a new altar there, and on it was what remained from the bull they had sacrificed.

²⁹The people asked each other, "Who did this?" After they investigated, someone told them that it was Gideon son of Joash who had done it.

³⁰The men of the town said to Joash, "Bring your son out here! He must be put to death, because he destroyed our god Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole where we worship!"

³¹But Joash replied to those who came against him, "Are you trying to defend Baal? Are you trying to argue his case? Anyone who tries to defend Baal should be executed by tomorrow morning! If Baal is truly a god, he ought to be able to defend himself, when someone tears down his altar!" ³²From that time, people called Gideon Jerub Baal, which means "Baal should defend himself," because he had torn down Baal's altar.

³³Soon after that, the armies of the people of Midian and of Amalek and the people from the east gathered together. They crossed the Jordan River to attack the Israelites. They set up their tents in the Valley of Jezreel.

³⁴Then Yahweh's Spirit took control of Gideon. He blew a ram's horn to summon the men to prepare to fight. So the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him. ³⁵He also sent messengers throughout the tribes descended from Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to tell their soldiers to come, and all of them came.

³⁶Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to enable me to rescue the Israelite people as you promised,

³⁷confirm it by doing this: Tonight I will put a dry wool fleece on the ground where I thresh the grain. Tomorrow morning, if the fleece is wet with dew but the ground is dry, then I will know that I am the one you will enable to rescue the people of Israel as you promised." ³⁸And that is what happened. When Gideon got up the next morning, he picked up the fleece, and squeezed out a whole bowlful of water!

³⁹Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me ask you to do one more thing. Tonight I will put the fleece out again. This time, let the fleece remain dry, while the ground is wet with the dew." ⁴⁰So that night, God did what Gideon asked him to do. The next morning the fleece was dry, but the ground was covered with dew.

Chapter 7

¹The next morning, Jerub Baal (his name is also Gideon) and his men got up early and went as far as the spring of Harod. The army of Midian was camped north of them, in the valley near the hill of Moreh. ²Yahweh said to Gideon, "You have too many soldiers with you. If I allow all of you to fight the army of Midian and your army defeats them, they will boast to me that they defeated their enemies by themselves, without my help. ³So tell the men, 'Whoever among you is timid or afraid may leave us and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So after Gideon told that to them, twenty-two thousand of them went home. Only ten thousand men were left there.

⁴But Yahweh told Gideon, "There are still too many men! Take them down to the spring, and there I will choose from among them, which ones will go with you and which ones will not go."

⁵When Gideon took the men down to the spring, Yahweh told him, "When they drink, put into one group the ones who lap the water with their tongues, like dogs do. Put into another group the ones who kneel down to drink with their mouths in the water." ⁶So when they drank, only three hundred men used their hands to bring water to their mouths. All the others drank by kneeling down and putting their mouths into the water.

⁷Then Yahweh told Gideon, "The three hundred men who lapped the water from their hands will be your army! I will help them defeat the Midianite army. Let all the others go home!" ⁸So Gideon's three hundred men collected the food and rams' horns (used as trumpets) from all the other men, and then he sent them home.

The men of Midian were camping in the valley below Gideon. ⁹During that night, Yahweh said to Gideon, "Get up and go down to their camp, and you will hear something that will convince you that I will enable your men to defeat them. ¹⁰But if you are afraid to go by yourself, take your servant Purah with you. ¹¹Go down and listen to what some of the Midian soldiers are saying. Then you will be very encouraged, and you will be ready to attack their camp." So Gideon took Purah with him, and they went down to the edge of the enemy camp. ¹²The armies of the people of Midian and Amalek and from the east had set up their tents and looked like a swarm of locusts. It seemed that their camels were too many to count, like the grains of sand on the seashore.

¹³Gideon crept closer and heard one man telling a friend about a dream. He said, "I just had a dream, and in the dream I saw a round loaf of barley bread tumble down into our Midian camp. It struck a tent so hard that the tent turned upside down and collapsed!"

¹⁴His friend said, "Your dream can mean only one thing. It means that God will enable Gideon, the man of Israel, to defeat all of the armies that are here with us men from Midian."

¹⁵When Gideon heard the man tell about his dream and the meaning of that dream, he thanked God. Then he and Purah returned to the Israelite camp, and he shouted to the men, "Get up! Because God is enabling you to defeat the men from Midian!" ¹⁶He divided his men into three groups. He gave each man a ram's horn (as a trumpet) and an empty clay jar. He also gave each of them a torch to carry.

¹⁷Then he said to them, "Watch me. When we come close to the enemy camp, spread out to surround the camp. Then do exactly what I do. ¹⁸As soon as my men blow their ram's horns, you men in the other two groups surrounding the camp blow your horns and shout, 'We are doing this for Yahweh and for Gideon!'"

¹⁹A while before midnight at the start of the "middle watch," just when a new group of guards took the places of the previous guards, Gideon and the hundred men with him arrived at the edge of the Midian camp. Suddenly he and his men blew their horns, and broke the jars that they were carrying. ²⁰Then the men in all three groups blew their horns and smashed their jars. They held the torches high with their left hands, and held up the horns with their right hands and alternatively blew them and shouted, "We have swords to fight for Yahweh and for Gideon!" ²¹Each of Gideon's men stood in his position around the enemy camp. As they watched, all the Midian men started running around and shouting in a panic.

²²While the three hundred Israelite men kept blowing their horns, Yahweh caused the Midianites to start fighting each other with their swords. Some of them killed each other. The rest fled. Some fled south to Beth Shittah. Some fled to the town of Zerarah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, near Tabbath. ²³Then Gideon sent messages to the soldiers in the areas where the descendants of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh lived, to tell them to come and pursue the army of Midian. ²⁴Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, saying, "Go down and attack the army of Midian. Go down to the Jordan River, to the places where people can wade across, to prevent enemy troops from crossing it! Station men as far south as Beth Barah."

So the men of Ephraim did what Gideon told them to do. ²⁵They also captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two generals of the Midian army. They killed Oreb at the big rock which is now called the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the place where they crush grapes that is now called the winepress of Zeeb. Afterwards, the Israelites cut off the heads of Oreb and Zeeb and brought them to Gideon, who was on the other side of the Jordan River.

Chapter 8

¹Then the soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim said to Gideon, "Why have you acted toward us like this? When you went out to fight against the army of Midian, why did you not call us to help you?" They argued very much with Gideon.

²But Gideon replied, "I have done very little compared with what you have done! The grapes you do not bother to pick in the land of Ephraim are much better than the whole harvest among the descendants of Abiezer! ³God helped you defeat Oreb and Zeeb, the generals of the army from Midian. That is much more important than what I did!" After Gideon told them that, they no longer resented what he had done.

⁴Then Gideon and his three hundred men went east. They came to the Jordan River and crossed it. Although they were very tired, they continued to pursue their enemies. ⁵When they arrived at the town of Succoth, Gideon said to the town leaders, "Please give my men bread that they may eat it! They are very tired. We are pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

⁶But the leaders of Succoth replied, "You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet. So why should we give food to your troops now? Catch them first, and then we will give you food."

⁷Gideon replied, "Because you said that, after Yahweh enables us to defeat Zebah and Zalmunna, we will return. And then we will make whips from thorns from the desert, and with them we will rip the flesh off your bones!"

⁸Gideon and his three hundred men went up to Peniel and asked for food there in the same way. But the people gave him the same answer. ⁹So he said to the men of Peniel, "After I defeat those kings and make peace, then I will come and pull down this tower!"

¹⁰By that time, Zebah and Zalmunna had gone to Karkor town with fifteen thousand troops. They were all that were left of the armies that had come from the people of the East, and 120,000 of their men had already been killed. ¹¹Gideon and his men went east along the road on which caravans travel. They went past the villages of Nobah and Jogbehah and arrived at the enemy camp by surprise. ¹²Zebah and Zalmunna fled, but Gideon's men pursued them. He captured the two kings of Midian—Zebah and Zalmunna, and their whole army was sent off in confusion.

¹³After that, Gideon and his men took Zebah and Zalmunna with them and started to return, going through the pass of Heres. ¹⁴There he captured a young man from Succoth, and demanded that he write down the names of all of the leaders in the town. The young man wrote down seventy-seven names. ¹⁵Then Gideon and his men returned to Succoth and said to those leaders, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. When we were here before, you made fun of me and said 'You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! After you catch them, we will give your exhausted men some food.'" ¹⁶Then Gideon's men took the town leaders and whipped them with whips made from briers from the

desert, to teach them that they deserved to be punished for not giving them food. ¹⁷Then they went to Peniel and tore down the tower, and killed all the men in the town.

¹⁸Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "The men you killed near Mount Tabor, what did they look like?"

They replied, "They were like you; they all looked like they were sons of a king."

¹⁹Gideon replied, "They were my brothers! Just as surely as Yahweh lives, I would not kill you if you had not killed them." ²⁰Then he turned to his oldest son, Jether. He said to him, "Kill them!" But Jether was only a boy, and he was afraid, so he did not pull out his sword to kill them.

²¹Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, "Do not ask a young boy to do the work that a man should do!" So Gideon killed both of them. Then he took the golden crescent-shaped ornaments from the necks of their camels.

²²Then a group of Israelite men came to Gideon and said to him, "You be our ruler! We want you and your son and your grandsons to be our rulers, because you rescued us from the Midian army."

²³But Gideon replied, "No, I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you."

²⁴Then he said, "I request only one thing. I request that each of you give me one earring from the things you captured after the battle." Now all the men descended from Ishmael wore gold earrings.

²⁵They replied, "We will be glad to give the earrings to you!" So they spread a cloth on the ground, and each man threw on it the gold earrings that he had taken from those whom he had killed in the battle. ²⁶The weight of all the earrings was twenty kilograms. That did not include other things that they gave to Gideon—the other ornaments or the pendants or the clothes that their kings wore or the gold chains that were on the necks of their camels.

²⁷Gideon made a sacred garment for the people and put it in his hometown of Ophrah. Soon the people worshiped it instead of worshiping only God. Gideon and all his family sinned by worshiping it.

²⁸That is how the Israelites defeated the people from Midian. The people of Midian did not become strong enough to attack Israel again. So while Gideon was alive, there was peace in the land for forty years.

²⁹Gideon went back home to live there. ³⁰He had many wives, and they bore him seventy sons. ³¹He also had a slave wife in the city of Shechem, who bore him a son whom he named Abimelech. ³²Gideon son of Joash died when he was very old. They buried his body in the grave where his father Joash was buried, at Ophrah, in the land of the Abietherites.

³³But as soon as Gideon died, the Israelites left God and gave themselves to worship the images of the god Baal, like adulteresses leave their husbands and go to other men. They made Baal-Berith the god they worshiped. ³⁴They forgot about Yahweh, the one who had rescued them from all their enemies that surrounded them. ³⁵And even though Gideon had done many good things for the Israelites, they did not act kindly toward Gideon's family.

Chapter 9

¹Gideon's son Abimelech went to talk with his mother's brothers in the city of Shechem. He said to them and to all his mother's relatives, ²"Ask all the leaders of Shechem: 'Do you think it would be good for all seventy of Gideon's sons to rule over you? Or would it be better to have only one man, Abimelech, to rule over you?' And do not forget that I am a part of your family!"

³So Abimelech's mother's brothers spoke to all the leaders of Shechem about what Abimelech had said. They said to each other, "We should allow Abimelech to rule over us, because he is our relative." ⁴So the leaders of Shechem took from the temple of their god Baal-Berith one kilo of silver and gave it to Abimelech. With that silver he paid some worthless troublemakers to help him, and they went with Abimelech wherever he went. ⁵Abimelech and his followers went to Ophrah, his father's town, and they murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of his father Gideon. They killed all those men on one huge rock. But Gideon's youngest son Jotham hid from Abimelech and his men,

and he escaped. ⁶Then all the leaders of the towns of Shechem and Beth-Millo gathered under the big sacred tree at Shechem. There they appointed Abimelech to be their leader.

⁷When Jotham heard about that, he climbed up Mount Gerizim. He stood at the top of the mountain and shouted to the people down below, "You leaders of Shechem, listen to me, in order that God will listen to you! ⁸One day the trees decided to appoint a king to rule over all of them. So they said to the olive tree, 'You be our king!'

⁹But the olive tree said, 'No! I will not be your king! The oil made from my fruit blesses both God and people. I will not stop producing olives from which we make that oil, in order to rule over you other trees!'

¹⁰Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and be our king!'

¹¹But the fig tree replied, 'No! I do not want to stop producing my good sweet fruit, and go and rule over you other trees!'

¹²Then the trees said to the grapevine, 'Come and be our king!'

¹³But the grapevine replied, 'No! I will not be your king! The new wine that is made from my grapes causes God and people to be happy. I do not want to stop producing grapes and go and rule over you other trees!'

¹⁴Then all the trees said to the thornbush, 'Come and be our king!'

¹⁵The thornbush said to the trees, 'If you truly want to appoint me to be your king, come into the shade of my tiny branches. But if you do not want to do that, I hope that fire will come out from me and burn up all the cedar trees in Lebanon country!'

¹⁶After Jotham finished telling them this parable, he said, "So now I ask you, were you being completely honest and sincere when you appointed Abimelech to be your king? Have you rewarded Gideon (who is also called Jerub Baal) by honoring him as he deserved because of all the good things he did for you? No! ¹⁷Do not forget that my father fought a battle for you, and he was willing to die for you if that were necessary, to save you from the power of the Midian people group. ¹⁸But now you have rebelled against my father's family, and you have murdered seventy of his sons on one huge rock. And you have appointed Abimelech—who is the son of my father's slave girl, not the son of his wife—to be the king who will rule you people of Shechem. You have done that only because he is one of your relatives! ¹⁹So, if today you think that you have truly acted fairly and sincerely toward Gideon and his family, I hope that Abimelech will cause you to be happy and that you will cause him to be happy. ²⁰But if what you did was not right, I wish that Abimelech will destroy Shechem and Beth Millo!" I wish that the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo will also destroy Abimelech!"

²¹After Jotham finished saying that, he escaped from them and ran away to the town of Beer. He stayed there because he was afraid that his half-brother Abimelech would try to kill him.

²²For three years Abimelech was the leader over the people of Israel. ²³Then God sent an evil spirit to cause trouble between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, with the result that the leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech. ²⁴The leaders of Shechem had helped Abimelech murder seventy of Gideon's sons, who were his half-brothers. So now God sent the evil spirit to punish all of them for what they had done. ²⁵The leaders of Shechem set an ambush on the hilltops. Those men robbed everyone who passed by. But someone told Abimelech about it, so he did not go near them.

²⁶There was a man named Gaal son of Ebed who moved into Shechem city, along with his brothers. The leaders of Shechem grew to trust him. ²⁷They went out to their vineyards to pick some grapes. They pressed the grapes to make juice, and then they made wine. Then they had a feast in the house of their god, and they ate a lot of food and drank a lot of wine. Then they cursed Abimelech. ²⁸Gaal said, "We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us! He is only one of Gideon's sons, so he really does not belong to us! And he appointed Zebul, the governor of our city, to be his deputy! We should be loyal to one of the descendants of Hamor, the founder of our city, to be our

leader, not Abimelech! ²⁹If you would appoint me to be your leader, I would get rid of Abimelech. I would say to him, 'Get your army ready! Come and fight us!'"

³⁰Someone told Zebul what Gaal had said, and he became very angry. ³¹He sent messengers to Abimelech. They told him, "Gaal and his brothers have come here to Shechem, and they are stirring up the people so they will rebel against you. ³²You and your men should get up during the night and go and hide in the fields outside the city. ³³As soon as the sun rises in the morning, get up and attack the city. When Gaal and his men come out to fight against you, you can do to them whatever you want to."

³⁴So Abimelech and all the men who were with him got up during the night. They divided into four groups and hid in the fields near Shechem. ³⁵The next morning, Gaal went out and stood at the entrance to the city gate. While he was standing there, Abimelech and his soldiers came out of their hiding places and started walking toward the city.

³⁶When Gaal saw the soldiers, he said to Zebul, "Look! There are people coming down from the hills!"

But Zebul said, "You are seeing only the shadows of trees on the hills. They are not people; they only look like people." ³⁷But Gaal looked again, and said, "Look! There are people coming down in the middle of the land! There is a group of them coming down by way of the oak tree where people claim to talk with the spirits of dead people!"

³⁸Zebul said to Gaal, "Now your bragging is worthless! You said, 'We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us?' You made fun of these men. So now go out and fight them!"

³⁹So Gaal led the men of Shechem outside the city to fight the army of Abimelech. ⁴⁰Abimelech and his men pursued them, and they killed many of Gaal's men before they could return safely inside the city gate. ⁴¹Abimelech then stayed at Arumah, about five miles away from Shechem, and Zebul's men forced Gaal and his brothers to leave Shechem.

⁴²The next day, the people of Shechem got ready to leave the city and work in their fields. When someone told Abimelech about that, ⁴³he divided his men into three groups, and told them to hide in the fields. So they did that. And when they saw the people coming out of the city, they jumped up and attacked them. ⁴⁴Abimelech and the men who were with him ran to the city gate and blocked it. The other two groups ran out to the people in the fields and attacked them. ⁴⁵Abimelech and his men fought all day. They captured the city and killed all the people. They tore down all the buildings, and then they threw salt over the ground to try to keep anything from growing there again.

⁴⁶When the leaders who lived in the tower outside of Shechem heard what had happened, they ran and hid inside the fortress, which was also a temple of their god El-Berith. ⁴⁷But someone told Abimelech that all the leaders had gathered there. ⁴⁸So he and all the men who were with him went up Mount Zalmon, which is near Shechem. Abimelech cut some branches of trees with an axe, and put them on his shoulders. Then he said to all the men who were with him, "Quickly, do what I have just done!" ⁴⁹So his men all cut branches carried them down the mountain, following Abimelech. They went to the fortress and piled the branches against its walls. Then they kindled a fire, and the fire burned down the fortress and killed all the people who were inside. So all the people who were inside the fortress—about a thousand men and women—died.

⁵⁰Then Abimelech and his men went to the city of Thebez. They surrounded it and captured it. ⁵¹But there was a strong tower inside the city. So all the men, women, and leaders of the city ran to the tower. When they were all inside, they locked the door. Then they climbed up to the roof of the tower. ⁵²Abimelech and his men came to the tower and tried to get in the door, but they could not. Then Abimelech prepared to light a fire to burn it down.

⁵³But when Abimelech came near the doorway, a woman who was on the roof dropped the upper half of a large grinding stone on his head, which cracked the bone of his skull.

⁵⁴Abimelech quickly called to the young man who carried Abimelech's weapons, and said, "Pull out your sword and kill me with it! I do not want people to say 'A woman killed Abimelech.'" So the young man thrust his sword into

Abimelech, and Abimelech died. ⁵⁵When the Israelite soldiers saw that Abimelech was dead, they all returned to their homes.

⁵⁶In that way God punished Abimelech for all the evil things that he had done to his father by murdering all seventy of his brothers. ⁵⁷God also punished the men of Shechem for the evil things that they had done. And when these things happened, it made true the curse of Jotham son of Gideon.

Chapter 10

¹After Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah and grandson of Dodo became the leader to rescue the Israelites from their enemies. He belonged to the tribe of Issachar, but he lived in Shamir city in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim live. ²He ruled as judge over Israel for twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

³After Tola died, Jair (the Gileadite) ruled as judge over Israel for twenty-two years. ⁴He had thirty sons, and each of them had his own donkey to ride on. They had thirty cities in the region of Gilead that are still named even today, Havvoth Jair (or the Cities of Jair). ⁵Then Jair died and was buried in the city of Kamon.

⁶Again the Israelites did things that Yahweh said were evil. They worshiped the Baal idols and female fertility idols called the Asthoreths. They worshiped the gods of the people groups of Aram, Sidon, Moab, and Ammon people groups, and the gods of the Philistines. They turned away from Yahweh and stopped worshiping him. ⁷So Yahweh was very angry with them, and he allowed the Philistines and Ammonites to conquer Israel. ⁸They crushed and oppressed the Israelites that year, and for eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who lived on the east side of the Jordan River. That was the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. ⁹Then the Ammonites crossed over the Jordan River to fight against the people of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. They caused the Israelites to live their lives with great fear and dread. ¹⁰So the Israelites cried out to Yahweh, saying "We have sinned against you. We have abandoned you, and we have worshiped the idols of Baal."

¹¹Yahweh answered them, saying, "I delivered you from the people groups of the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹²and also from the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites. I did this because they hurt and imprisoned you. You cried out to me, and I brought you to freedom. ¹³But now you have abandoned me, and you have been worshiping other gods. Therefore, I will not rescue you again and again. ¹⁴You have chosen those gods to be the ones you worship. So ask them to help you. Let them be the ones who rescue you when you are in trouble!"

¹⁵But the people of Israel said to Yahweh, "We have sinned. Punish us in whatever way you wish. But please rescue us today!" ¹⁶Then the Israelites threw away the idols of the foreign gods they had cherished, and they worshiped Yahweh. He saw that they were suffering very much, and he reached the limit of his endurance over the misery of Israel.

¹⁷The Ammon people group gathered to fight against the Israelites, and they set up their tents in Gilead. The Israelite soldiers gathered and set up their tents at Mizpah. ¹⁸The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, "Who will lead our attack against the Ammonite army? The one who will lead us will become the leader of all us who live in Gilead."

Chapter 11

¹There was a man from the region of Gilead named Jephthah. He proved himself to be a great warrior. But his mother was a prostitute. His father was Gilead. ²Gilead's wife gave birth to several sons. When they grew up, they forced Jephthah to leave home, saying to him, "You are the son of another woman, not the son of our mother. So when our father dies, you will not receive any of his property." ³So Jephthah ran away from his brothers, and he

lived in the land of Tob. While he was there, some lawless men joined together with Jephthah, and they went out raiding together.

⁴Some time later, the soldiers of the Ammon people group attacked the soldiers of Israel. ⁵And the leaders of Gilead went out to find Jephthah so they could bring him back, and away from the land of Tob. ⁶They said to him, "Come with us and lead our army, and help us fight the army of Ammon!"

⁷But Jephthah replied, "You hated me! You forced me to leave my father's house! So why have you come to me now and ask for my help, just when you have trouble?"

⁸The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we are coming to you now. Come and fight with us and lead our soldiers against the soldiers of Ammon, and you will be the leader over everyone who lives in Gilead."

⁹Jephthah answered them, "If I go back to Gilead with you to fight against the army of Ammon, and if Yahweh helps us to defeat them, then I will be your leader."

¹⁰They replied, "Yahweh is a witness to everything we are saying to you. So he will punish us if we do not what we are promising you." ¹¹So Jephthah went with them back to Gilead, and the people appointed him to be their leader and the commander of their army. And Jephthah repeated to Yahweh there at Mizpah the terms of the agreement he had made.

¹²Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammon people group. They asked the king, "What have we done to make you angry, so your army is coming to fight against the people in our land?"

¹³The king replied, "You took our land when you came here from Egypt. You took all our land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north. So now give it back to us without a fight."

¹⁴So Jephthah sent the messengers to the king again. ¹⁵They said to him, "This is what Jephthah says: 'Israel did not take the land of the Moabites and the Ammonites. ¹⁶When the Israelite people came out of Egypt, they walked through the desert to the Red Sea, and then walked across it and traveled to the town of Kadesh at the border of the region of Edom. ¹⁷They sent messengers to the king of the Edomites to say to him, "Please allow us to walk across your land." But the king of the Edomites refused. Later they sent the same message to the king of the Moabites, but he also refused to allow them to go through his land. So the Israelites stayed at Kadesh for a long time. ¹⁸Then the Israelites went into the desert and walked outside the borders of Edom and Moab. They walked east of Moab, and then north of the Arnon River, which is the northern border of Moab. They did not cross into the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab.

¹⁹Then the leaders of Israel sent a message to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon. They asked him, "Please allow us Israelite people to cross through your land so we may go into the land that is ours." ²⁰But Sihon did not trust the Israelites to pass through his land in peace. So he gathered all his soldiers and they set up their tents at the village of Jahaz, and there he fought against Israel. ²¹But Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave help to the Israelite army and they defeated Sihon and his army. Then they took possession of all the land where the Amorites had lived. ²²The Israelites took all the land that belonged to the Amorites, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and from the desert in the east to the Jordan River in the west.

²³It was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who forced the Amorites to leave the places where they lived, as the Israelites advanced. So do you now think that you can now take possession of their land? ²⁴You have the right to the land when your god Chemosh gives it to you. And we will live in the land that Yahweh our God has given to us! ²⁵Are you better than Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab? He never dared to fight against Israel! ²⁶For three hundred years the Israelites lived in the cities of Heshbon and Aroer, in the surrounding towns, and in all the cities along the Arnon River. Why have you Ammonites not taken back those cities during all those years? ²⁷We have not done wrong against you, but you are doing wrong against me by attacking me and my army. I trust that Yahweh, who is the judge, will decide whether the people of Israel or the people of Ammon are in the right."

²⁸But the king of Ammon ignored the warning contained in this message from Jephthah.

²⁹Then the Spirit of Yahweh took control of Jephthah. Jephthah went through Gilead and through the area where the tribe of Manasseh lived, to enlist men for his army. He finally gathered them together in the city of Mizpah in Gilead to fight against the Ammonites. ³⁰There Jephthah made a solemn promise to Yahweh, saying "If you will give help to my army to defeat the Ammonites, ³¹when I return from the battle, I will sacrifice to you whatever comes out of my house to greet me. That will belong to you."

³²Then Jephthah and his men went from Mizpah to attack the Ammonites, and Yahweh enabled his army to defeat them. ³³Jephthah and his men killed them, from the city of Aroer all the way to the area around the city of Minnith. They destroyed twenty cities, as far as the city of Abel Keramim. So the Israelites completely defeated the Ammonites.

³⁴When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, his daughter was the first one to come out of the house to meet him. She was joyfully playing a tambourine and dancing. She was his only child and he had no other sons or daughters. ³⁵When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes to show that he was very sad about what he was going to do. He said to her, "My daughter, seeing you now, you have crushed me with a terrible sorrow, because I made a solemn promise to Yahweh to sacrifice the first one who came out of my house, and I must do what I promised."

³⁶His daughter said, "My father, you made a solemn promise to Yahweh. So you must do to me what you promised, because you said that you would do that if Yahweh helped you to defeat our enemies, the Ammonites." ³⁷Then she also said, "But allow me to do one thing. First, allow me to go into the hills and wander around for two months. Since I will never be married and have children, allow me and my friends to go and cry together."

³⁸Jephthah replied, "All right, you may go." So she left for two months. She and her friends stayed in the hills and they cried for her because she would never be married. ³⁹After two months, she returned to her father Jephthah, and he did to her what he had solemnly promised. So his daughter never was married.

Because of that, the Israelites now have a custom ⁴⁰that the young Israelite women go into the hills for four days every year. There they remember and cry about what happened to the daughter of Jephthah.

Chapter 12

¹The leaders of the tribe of Ephraim called together their soldiers, and they crossed the Jordan River and went to the town of Zaphon to talk with Jephthah. They said to him, "Why did you not ask us to help your army fight the Ammonites. So we will burn down your house while you are in it."

²Jephthah replied, "The Ammonites were really oppressing us. When we were prepared to start to attack them, I requested you to come and help us, but you refused. My men and I defeated the Ammonites, but you did not help us. ³When I saw that you would not come to help us, I risked my own life by leading our people to pass through the people of Ammon. And Yahweh helped us to defeat them. So why do you come to fight against me today?"

⁴Then Jephthah called together the soldiers of Gilead to fight against the soldiers of Ephraim. They attacked them because men of the tribe of Ephraim said, "You men from Gilead are just refugees here in the land of Ephraim and Manasseh. ⁵The Gileadites captured the shallow places in the Jordan River where people could cross over the river and go to the territory of Ephraim. If someone from the tribe of Ephraim came to the ford to try to escape, he would say, "Allow me to cross the river." Then the men of Gilead would ask him, "Are you from the tribe of Ephraim?" If he said "No," ⁶they would say to him, "Say the word 'Shibboleth.'" The men of Ephraim could not pronounce that word correctly. So if the person from the tribe of Ephraim said "Sibboleth," they would know that he was lying and that he was really from the tribe of Ephraim, and they would kill him there at the ford.

So the men of Gilead killed forty-two thousand people from the tribe of Ephraim at that time.

⁷Jephthah, the man from Gilead, served as a judge and leader over Israel for six years. Then he died and was buried in one of the towns of Gilead.

⁸After Jephthah died, a man named Ibzan, from Bethlehem, became a leader and a judge over Israel. ⁹He had thirty sons and he gave thirty daughters away in marriage. He brought in thirty daughters from families outside his clan. He was a leader and a judge over Israel for seven years. ¹⁰When died, he was buried in Bethlehem.

¹¹After Ibzan died, a man named Elon, from the tribe of Zebulun, became a leader of Israel. He was their leader for ten years. ¹²Then he died and was buried in the city of Aijalon in the area where the tribe of Zebulun lives.

¹³After Elon died, a man named Abdon son of Hillel, from the city of Pirathon, became a leader and a judge over Israel. ¹⁴He had forty sons and thirty grandsons. They had seventy donkeys. Abdon was a leader and a judge over Israel for eight years. ¹⁵When Abdon died, he was buried in Pirathon, in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Chapter 13

¹Again the Israelite people did evil, and Yahweh saw what they had done. So Yahweh helped the Philistines to conquer them. They ruled over the Israelites for forty years.

²There was a man named Manoah from the family of Dan who lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, so they had no children. ³One day, the angel of Yahweh appeared to Manoah's wife and said to her, "Even though you have not been able to give birth to any children until now, you will soon become pregnant and you will give birth to a son. ⁴From now until he is born, you must not drink any wine or other alcoholic drink, and you must not eat any food that the law says we should not eat. ⁵You will become pregnant. After you give birth to your son, no one may ever cut his hair. He will be dedicated to God even before he is born until the day he dies. He will begin the work that will rescue Israel from the power of the Philistines."

⁶The woman ran and told her husband, "A man whom God sent came to me. I was very afraid of him, because he was like an angel from God. I did not ask where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. ⁷But he told me, 'You have become pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. Until then, you must not drink any wine or any alcoholic drink, and you must not eat any food that God's law says you are not to eat. Your son will be a Nazirite; that is one who is dedicated to God before he is born and until the day he dies.'"

⁸Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh, saying, "O Lord, I plead with you, allow that man whom you sent to us to come again and teach us how we should raise the boy who will be born to us."

⁹God did what Manoah asked, and his angel came to the woman again. This time she was out in the field. But again her husband Manoah was not with her. ¹⁰So she quickly ran and said to her husband, "The man who appeared to me a few days ago has come back again!"

¹¹Manoah ran back with his wife and asked him, "Are you the man who talked with my wife a few days ago?" He replied, "Yes I am."

¹²Manoah asked him, "When what you promised occurs and my wife gives birth to a son, what rules will there be for the child, and what work will he do when he grows up?"

¹³Yahweh's angel replied, "Your wife must obey all the instructions I gave her. ¹⁴Before the baby is born, she must not eat grapes, drink wine or any other alcoholic drink, or eat anything that the law says we should not eat."

¹⁵Then Manoah said, "Please stay here until we can kill and cook a young goat for you."

¹⁶Yahweh's angel replied, "I will stay here, but I will not eat anything. However, you may kill an animal and sacrifice it as a burned offering to Yahweh." But Manoah did not yet realize that this was Yahweh's angel.

¹⁷Then Manoah asked him, "What is your name? When what you have promised happens, we want to honor you."

¹⁸Yahweh's angel replied, "Why do you ask me my name? It is too marvelous." ¹⁹Then Manoah killed a young goat and burned it on a rock, along with a grain offering, as a sacrifice to Yahweh. Then Yahweh did an amazing thing as Manoah and his wife watched. ²⁰When the flames went up from the altar toward the sky, Yahweh's angel went up in the flame from the altar. Manoah and his wife saw that and lay facedown on the ground. ²¹Although Yahweh's angel did not appear again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized who this angel really was.

²²So Manoah said, "Now we are sure to die, because we have seen God!"

²³But his wife said, "No, I do not think so. If Yahweh intended to kill us, he would not have accepted the burned offering and the grain offering. And he would not have appeared to us and told us the wonderful thing that would happen to us, and he would not have performed this miracle."

²⁴When their son was born, they named him Samson. Yahweh blessed him as he grew up. ²⁵While he was in Mahaneh-Dan, which is between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, Yahweh's Spirit began to control him.

Chapter 14

¹Samson went down to the town of Timnah, and there he saw a young Philistine woman. ²When he returned home, he told his mother and father, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines in Timnah, and I want you to get her for me so I can marry her."

³His mother and father objected very strongly. They said, "Is there no woman from our tribe, or from the other Israelite tribes, that you could marry? Why do you want a wife from the Philistines, who are not circumcised and do not worship Yahweh?"

But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She is the one I want!" ⁴His mother and father did not realize that Yahweh was arranging this. He was preparing a way for Samson to create a conflict with the Philistines, for they were ruling over Israel at that time. ⁵Then Samson went down to Timnah with his mother and father. A young lion roared at him, threatening him near the vineyards close to the town. ⁶Then Yahweh's Spirit came on Samson, and he tore the lion apart with his hands. He did it as easily as if it had been a young goat. But he did not tell his mother and father about it. ⁷When they arrived in Timnah, Samson talked with the young woman, and he liked her very much. And his father made arrangements for the wedding.

⁸Later, when Samson returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to see the lion carcass. He discovered that a swarm of bees had made a nest in the carcass and had made some honey. ⁹So he dug out some of the honey into his hands and ate some of it as he was walking along. He also gave some of it to his mother and father, but he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

¹⁰As his father was making the final arrangements for the marriage, Samson gave a feast for the young men in that area. That was the custom for men to do when they were about to be married. ¹¹As soon as her relatives saw him, they brought him thirty of their friends to be with him.

¹²Samson said to them, "Allow me to tell you a riddle. If you tell me the correct meaning of my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give each one of you a linen robe and an extra set of clothes. ¹³But if you cannot tell me the correct meaning, you must each give me a linen robe and an extra set of clothes." They replied, "All right. Tell us your riddle."

¹⁴So he said,

"From out of the eater I found something to eat;

from out of the strong I found something sweet."

But for three days they could not tell him the meaning of the riddle.

¹⁵On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, "Use your tricks and make your husband tell you the meaning of the riddle. If you do not do that, we will burn down your father's house, with you and your family inside it! Did you invite us here only to make us poor by forcing us to buy a lot of clothes for your husband?"

¹⁶So Samson's wife came to him, crying. She said to him, "You do not really love me. You hate me! You have told a riddle to my friends, but you have not told me the answer to it!"

He replied, "I have not even told my own mother and father the answers, so why should I tell you?" ¹⁷She continued to cry every time she was with him, all during the rest of the celebration. Finally, on the seventh day, because she continued to nag him, he told her the answer to the riddle. Then she told it to the young men.

¹⁸So before sunset on the seventh day, the young men came to Samson and said to him,

"Nothing is sweeter than honey;

Nothing is as strong as a lion."

Samson replied, "People use their own animals to plow their fields. My bride is like a young heifer that you have used, but she does not belong to you!

If you had not forced her to ask me,
you would not have learned the answer!"

¹⁹Then Yahweh's Spirit powerfully came on Samson. He went down to the coast at the city of Ashkelon and killed thirty men. He took their clothes and went back to Timnah; then he gave them to the men at the feast. But he was very angry about what had happened, so he went back home to live with his mother and father. ²⁰So his wife's father gave her instead to the man who had been Samson's special friend when he got married.

Chapter 15

¹During the time that they were harvesting the wheat, Samson took a young goat to Timnah as a present for his wife. He wanted to sleep with his wife, but her father would not let him go into her room.

²He said to Samson, "I really thought that you hated her. So I gave her to the man who was your best friend at the wedding, and she has married him. But look, her younger sister is more beautiful than she is. Take her instead."

³Samson replied, "No! And this time I have a right to get revenge on you Philistines!" ⁴Then he went out into the fields and caught three hundred foxes. He tied their tails together, two by two. He fastened torches to each pair of tails. ⁵Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the fields of the Philistines. The fire from the torches burned all the grain to the ground, including the grain that had been cut and stacked in bundles. The fire also burned down their grapevines and their olive trees.

⁶The Philistines asked, "Who did this?" Someone told them, "Samson did it. He married a woman from Timnah, but then his father-in-law gave her to the man who was Samson's best friend at the wedding, and she married him." So the Philistines went to Timnah and got the woman and her father, and burned them to death.

⁷Samson found out about that and said to them, "Because you have done this, I will get revenge on you, and then I will be happy!" ⁸So he attacked the Philistines furiously and killed many of them. Then he went to hide in a cave in the large rock at a place called Etam.

⁹The Philistines did not know where he was, so they went up to where the descendants of Judah lived, and they arranged themselves for battle at the town of Lehi. ¹⁰The men there asked the Philistines, "Why do you want to attack us?"

The Philistines replied, "We have come to capture Samson. We have come to get revenge on him for what he did to us."

¹¹Someone there knew where Samson was hiding. So three thousand men from Judah went down to get Samson at the cave in the rock where he was hiding. They said to Samson, "Do you not realize that the people of Philistia are ruling over us? Do you not realize what they will do to us?"

Samson replied, "The only thing I did was that I got revenge on them for what they did to me."

¹²But the men from Judah said to him, "We have come to tie you up and put you in the hands of the Philistines."

Samson said, "All right, but promise me that you yourselves will not kill me!"

¹³They replied, "We will just tie you up and take you to the Philistines. We will not kill you." So they tied him with two new ropes and led him away from the cave. ¹⁴When they arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came toward him, shouting triumphantly. But Yahweh's Spirit powerfully came on Samson. He snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they had been stalks of burned flax, and they fell off his wrists. ¹⁵Then he saw a donkey's jawbone lying on the ground. It was new, so it was hard. He picked it up and killed about a thousand Philistine men with it. ¹⁶Then Samson wrote this poem:

"With the jawbone of a donkey

I have made them like a heap of dead donkeys.

With the jawbone of a donkey

I have killed a thousand men."

¹⁷When he finished, he threw the jawbone away, but later that place was called Ramath Lehi (or Jawbone Hill).

¹⁸Then Samson was very thirsty, so he called out to Yahweh, "You have given me strength to win a great victory. So now must I die because of being thirsty, with the result that those heathen, uncircumcised Philistines will capture me?" ¹⁹So God caused water to gush out of a depression in the ground at Lehi. Samson drank from it and soon felt strong again. He named that place En Hakkore (or "The spring of the one who called out"). That spring can still be found at Lehi, even today.

²⁰Samson was the leader and judge over Israel for twenty years, but during that time the Philistines were in control of the entire land.

Chapter 16

¹Samson went to the city of Gaza. He saw a prostitute there, and he spent the night with her. ²The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here." They surrounded the place where Samson was, and they waited in secret all night. They were beside the city gate, so they would be sure he could not escape. They said, "Let us wait until the light, and then we will kill him."

³But Samson did not stay there all night. At midnight, he got up. He went to the city gate, he took hold of its two posts, and he lifted them up out of the ground, with its connecting cross bar still attached. He put it on his shoulders and carried it many miles uphill, in front of the town of Hebron.

⁴Later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. She lived in the Valley of Sorek (in the Philistine area). ⁵The Philistine leaders went to her and said, "Use your tricks to find out from Samson what makes him so strong. And find out how we can subdue him and tie him up securely. If you do that, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver."

⁶So Delilah went to Samson and said, "Please tell me what makes you so strong, and tell me how someone can subdue you and tie you up."

⁷Samson said, "If someone ties me with seven new bowstrings, ones that are not dry yet, I will become as weak as other men."

⁸So after Delilah told that to the Philistine leaders, they brought seven new bowstrings to Delilah. ⁹Then she hid the leaders in one of the rooms in her house. She tied Samson up with the bowstrings and then called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come here to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as easily as though they had been strings that had been singed in a fire. So the Philistines did not find out what made Samson so strong.

¹⁰Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have deceived me and lied to me! Now tell me the truth, how someone can tie you up securely."

¹¹Samson replied, "If someone ties me with new ropes, ones that have never been used, I will be as weak as other men."

¹²So again, she told the Philistine leaders, and then came and hid in the room as they did before. And again, while Samson was sleeping, she took the new ropes and tied him up with them and then called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they had been threads.

¹³Then Delilah said, "You have deceived me and lied to me again! Please tell me how someone can tie you up securely!" Samson replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the threads you are weaving on the loom, and then fasten those threads with a nail that makes the threads tight, then I will become as weak as other men."

So again, Delilah held the seven braids of his hair, and wove them into the threads on the loom, ¹⁴and she secured them with a pin. Then she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up and pulled away his hair, taking with it the pin of the loom and the fabric in the loom.

¹⁵Then Delilah said to him, "How can you say that you love me when you do not tell me the truth about yourself? You have deceived me three times, and you still have not told me what really makes you so strong!" ¹⁶Day after day she used every trick to get him to tell her his secret. He thought he would die from her nagging.

¹⁷Finally Samson told her the truth. He said, "I have been set apart for God since the day I was born. And because of that, my hair has never been cut. If my hair were shaved off, my strength would be gone, and I would be as weak as other men."

¹⁸Delilah realized that this time he had told her the truth. So she called together the Philistine leaders, saying, "Come back one more time, because Samson has finally told me the secret about his strength." So the Philistine leaders returned and gave Delilah the money they promised to give her. ¹⁹Again she lulled Samson to sleep, with his head in her lap. Then she called one of the Philistine men to come and cut off Samson's hair. As he did that, Samson became weak; he had no more strength.

²⁰Then after she tied him up, she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!"

He woke up and thought, "I will do as I did before. I will shake these ropes off myself and be free!" But he did not realize that Yahweh had left him.

²¹So the Philistine men seized him and gouged out his eyes. Then they took him to Gaza. There they put him in prison and bound him with bronze chains. They made him turn a large millstone to grind grain every day. ²²But his hair started to grow again after it had been cut.

²³Several months later the Philistine leaders celebrated a big festival. During the festival they offered sacrifices to their god Dagon. They praised him, saying, "Our god has enabled us to defeat our great enemy Samson!"

²⁴When the other people saw Samson, they also praised their god Dagon, saying,

“Our god has put our great enemy into our hands.

Our god helped us to capture the one who has harmed our country so much!”

²⁵By that time the people were half-drunk. They shouted, “Bring Samson out of the prison! Bring him here so he can entertain us!”

So they brought Samson from the prison and made him stand in the center of the temple. They made him stand between the two pillars that held up the roof. ²⁶Samson said to the servant who was leading him by his hand, “Place my hands against the two pillars. I want to rest against them.” ²⁷At that time the temple was full of men and women. All the Philistine leaders were also there. And there were about three thousand people on the roof, watching Samson and making fun of him. ²⁸Samson prayed to Yahweh and he said, “Lord Yahweh, think about me again! Please give me strength only this once more, so that I may get revenge on the Philistines for gouging out my eyes!” ²⁹Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars of the temple—his right hand on one pillar and his left hand on the other one. ³⁰Then he shouted to God, “Let me die with the Philistines!” He pushed with all his strength. The pillars collapsed, and the temple crashed down on the Philistine leaders and all the other Philistine people, and they all died. So Samson killed more people when he died than he had killed all during his life.

³¹Later his brothers and their relatives went down from Zorah to Gaza to get his body. They took it back home and buried it between Zorah and Eshtaol, at the place where Samson’s father Manoah was buried. Now Samson had led Israel for twenty years.

Chapter 17

¹There was a man named Micah who lived in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim live. ²One day he said to his mother, “I heard you curse whoever stole eleven hundred pieces of silver from your house. I am the one who took the silver, and I still have it.” His mother replied, “My son, I pray that Yahweh will bless you.”

³Micah gave all the silver back to his mother. Then she said to herself, “I will give some of this silver to Yahweh.” And she said to her son, “My son, I want you to make an idol and a statue from this silver. So I will give some of this silver back to you for making these things.”

⁴After he had given the silver back to his mother, she took two hundred pieces and gave them to a metal worker. With the silver that man made a carved figure and a cast metal figure, and gave them to Micah. Micah put them in his house.

⁵He had a house in which he worshiped his idols. He made a kind of vest that was worn by priests, and some smaller, personal idols and Micah gave one of his sons the task of being the priest for all his idols. ⁶At that time, Israel did not have a king, and everyone did whatever they each decided was okay.

⁷There was a young man who had been living in town of Bethlehem which is in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. He wanted to work as a priest because he was a member of the tribe of Levi. ⁸So he left Bethlehem to find another place to live and work. He came to Micah’s house in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived.

⁹Micah asked him, “Where are you from?”

He replied, “I come from Bethlehem. I am from the tribe of Levi, and I am looking for a place to live and work as a priest.” ¹⁰Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and you can advise me and be my priest. Each year I will give to you ten pieces of silver and some new clothes. And I will provide food for you.” ¹¹So the young man agreed to live with Micah. He became like one of Micah’s own sons. ¹²Micah appointed him to be a priest, and he lived in Micah’s house. ¹³Then Micah said, “Now I know that Yahweh will do good things for me, because I have a man from the tribe of Levi to be my priest.”

Chapter 18

¹At that time the Israelites had no king.

The tribe of Dan was looking for a good place for them to settle down. The other Israelite tribes had been able to receive the land that had been allotted to them, but the tribe of Dan had not been able to do that. ²So they chose five soldiers from their clans, men who lived in the cities of Zorah and Eshtaol, to go through the land and explore it and try to find some land where their tribe could live.

They came to Micah's house in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived, and they stayed there that night.

³While they were in his house, when they heard the young man who had become Micah's priest talking, they recognized him from his accent. So they went to him and asked him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing here? Why did you come here?"

⁴He told them the things that Micah had done for him. And he said, "Micah has hired me, and I have become his priest."

⁵So they said to him, "Please ask God if we will succeed in what we are trying to do on this journey."

⁶The young man replied, "Go in the knowledge that Yahweh will be with you on this journey."

⁷Then the five men left. When they came to the city of Laish, they saw that the people there lived safely, as the people did in the city of Sidon. The people there thought that they were safe, because there was no one nearby to cause trouble for them, they were far from Sidon, and they rarely had contact with any outsiders.

⁸When those five men returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, their relatives asked them "What did you find out?"

⁹They replied, "We have found some land, and it is very good. We should go and attack the people who live there. Why are you staying here and doing nothing? Do not wait any longer! We should go immediately and take possession of that land! ¹⁰When you go there, you will see that there is plenty of land, and it has everything that we will need. The people there are not expecting anyone to attack them. God is certainly giving that land to us."

¹¹So six hundred men from the tribe of Dan left Zorah and Eshtaol, carrying their weapons. ¹²On their way they set up their tents near the city of Kiriath Jearim in the area where the tribe of Judah live. That is why the area west of Kiriath Jearim was named Mahaneh Dan (or the "Camp of Dan"), and that is still its name. ¹³From there, they went to the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived. And they arrived at Micah's house.

¹⁴The five men who had explored the land near Laish said to their fellow Israelites, "Do you know that in one of these houses there is a sacred vest, several household idols, a carved figure and a cast metal figure? We think that you know what you should do." ¹⁵So they went to the house where the man from the tribe of Levi lived, which was the house where Micah lived, and they greeted the young man from the tribe of Levi who was Micah's priest. ¹⁶The six hundred men of the tribe of Dan stood outside the gate of the house, carrying their weapons. ¹⁷The five men who had explored the land went into Micah's house, and took the carved figure, the sacred vest, the household gods, and the cast metal figure. While they did that, the six hundred men stood outside the gate, talking with the priest.

¹⁸When the priest saw them bringing out the carved figure, the sacred vest, the household gods, and cast metal figure, and he said to them, "What are you doing?"

¹⁹They replied, "Be quiet! Do not say anything! You come with us and be like a father to us and a priest for us. Is it better for you to stay here and be a priest for the people in the house of one man, or to be a priest for a clan, and a priest for a whole tribe of Israelites?" ²⁰The priest liked what they were suggesting. So he took the sacred vest and the household gods, and the carved figure, and he prepared to go with the people. ²¹All the men made their wives and little children, their animals, and everything else that they owned to travel just in front of themselves.

²²After they had gone a little distance from Micah's house, Micah saw what was happening. He quickly summoned the men who lived near him, and they ran and caught up with the men from the tribe of Dan. ²³They shouted at them. The men of the tribe of Dan turned around and said to Micah, "What is the problem? Why have you gathered these men to pursue us?"

²⁴Micah shouted, "You took the silver idols that were made for me! You also took my priest! I do not have anything left! So why do you ask me, 'What is the problem?'"

²⁵The men from the tribe of Dan replied, "You better not say anything about this matter. Some of our men might become angry and attack you, killing you and your family!" ²⁶Then the men from the tribe of Dan continued walking. Micah realized that there was a very large group of them, so that it would be useless for him to try to fight them. So he turned around and went home.

²⁷The men of the tribe of Dan were carrying the things that had been made for Micah, and they also took his priest, and they continued traveling to Laish. They attacked the people who were peacefully living there, and killed them with their swords. Then they burned everything in the city. ²⁸There was no group of people to rescue the people of Laish. Laish was far from Sidon, so the people who lived there could not help the people of Laish. And the people of Laish had no other allies. Laish was in a valley near the town of Beth Rehob.

The people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and started to live there. ²⁹They gave a new name to the city, they called it Dan, in honor of their ancestor whose name was Dan. He was one of Israel's sons. The town used to be called Laish. ³⁰The people of the tribe of Dan set up in the city a carved figure that had been made for Micah. Jonathan son of Gershom, and the grandson of Moses, was appointed to be their priest. His descendants continued to be priests until the Israelites were captured and taken away. ³¹After the people of the tribe of Dan set up the carved figure that had been made for Micah, and it stayed there as long as the house of God was in Shiloh.

Chapter 19

¹At that time the Israelite people had no king.

There was a man from the tribe of Levi who lived in a remote place in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lives. He had previously taken to live with him a woman who was a slave. She was from Bethlehem, in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. ²But she started to sleep with other men also. Then she left him and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. She stayed there for four months. ³Then her husband took his servant and two donkeys and went to Bethlehem. He went to ask her to come back to live with him again. When he arrived at her father's house, she invited him to come in. Her father was happy to see him. ⁴The woman's father asked him to stay. So he stayed there for three days. During that time he ate and drank and slept there.

⁵On the fourth day, they all got up early in the morning. The man from the tribe of Levi was preparing to leave, but the woman's father said to him, "Eat something before you go." ⁶So the two men sat down to eat and drink together. Then the woman's father said to him, "Please stay another night. Relax and have a good time." ⁷The man from the tribe of Levi wanted to leave, but the woman's father requested him to stay one more night. So he stayed again that night. ⁸On the fifth day, the man got up early and prepared to leave. But the woman's father said to him again, "Have something to eat. Wait until this afternoon, and then leave." So the two men ate together.

⁹In the afternoon, when the man from the tribe of Levi and his slave wife and his servant got up to leave, the woman's father said, "It will soon be dark. The day is almost finished. Stay here tonight and have a good time. Tomorrow morning you can get up early and leave for your home." ¹⁰But the man from the tribe of Levi did not want to stay for another night. He put saddles on his two donkeys, and started to go with his slave wife and his servant toward the city of Jebus, which is now named Jerusalem.

¹¹When it was late in the afternoon, they came near to Jebus. The servant said to his master, "We should stop in this city where the Jebus people group live, and stay here tonight."

¹²But his master said, "No, it would not be good for us to stay here where foreign people live. There are no Israelite people here. We will go on to the city of Gibeah." ¹³He said to his servant, "Let us go. It is not far to Gibeah. We can go there, or we can go a bit further to Ramah. We can stay in one of those two cities tonight." ¹⁴So they continued walking. When they came near to Gibeah, where people from the tribe of Benjamin live, the sun was setting.

¹⁵They stopped to stay there that night. They went to the public square of that city and sat down. But no one who passed by invited them to stay in their house for that night.

¹⁶But then an old man came by. He had been working in the fields. He was from the hill country of the tribe of Ephraim, but at that time he was living in Gibeah. ¹⁷He realized that the man from the tribe of Levi was only traveling and that he did not have a place to stay in that city. So he asked the man, "Where have you come from? And where are you going?"

¹⁸He replied, "We are traveling from Bethlehem to my home in the hill country where people of the tribe of Ephraim live. I went from there to Bethlehem, but now we are going to Shiloh where Yahweh's house is. No one here has invited us to stay in their house tonight. ¹⁹We have straw and food for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and the young woman and my servant. We do not need anything else."

²⁰The old man said, "May everything go well for you. I can provide whatever you need. Do not stay here in the square tonight." ²¹Then the old man took them to his house. He gave food to the donkeys. He gave water to the man and the woman and the servant to wash their feet. And the old man gave them something to eat and drink.

²²While they were having a good time together, some wicked men from that city surrounded the house and started to bang on the door. They shouted to the old man, "Bring out to us the man who has come to your house. We want to have sex with him."

²³The old man went outside and said to them, "My brothers, I will not do that. That would be a very evil thing. This man is a guest in my house. You should not do such a terrible thing! ²⁴Look, my virgin daughter and his slave wife are here. I will bring them out to you now. You may do to them whatever you wish, but do not do such a terrible thing to this man!"

²⁵But the men did not pay attention to what he said. So the man took his slave wife and sent her to them, outside the house. They forced her to have sex with them and abused her all night. Then at dawn, they let her go. ²⁶She returned to the old man's house, and she fell down at the doorway and lay there until it was light.

²⁷The next morning, her master got up and went outside of the house to continue his journey. He saw his slave wife lying there at the doorway of the house, her hands still touching the doorsill. ²⁸He said to her, "Get up! We will go now!" But she did not answer. He put her body on the donkey, and he and his servant traveled to his home.

²⁹When he arrived at his home, he took a knife and he cut the body of the slave woman into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece to each area of Israel, along with a message telling what had happened. ³⁰Everyone who saw a piece of the body and the message said, "Nothing like this has ever happened before. Not since our ancestors left Egypt have we heard of such a terrible thing. We need to think carefully about it. Someone should decide what we should do."

Chapter 20

¹All the soldiers of Israel came out united as one man, from the city of Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, and from the region of Gilead to the east of the Jordan River, all of them heard what had happened. So they gathered together before Yahweh at Mizpah. ²The leaders of eleven of the tribes of Israel stood in front of the people who gathered there. There were 400,000 men on foot, fighting men who were there. ³The people of the tribe of Benjamin heard that the other Israelites had gone up to Mizpah, but none of the men from the Benjamin tribe had gone to the meeting there.

The people of Israel asked about the evil thing that had happened. ⁴So the Levite who was the husband of the woman who had been killed replied, "My slave wife and I came to Gibeah, wanting to stay there that night. ⁵That evening, the men of Gibeah came to attack me. They surrounded the house where I was staying and wanted to have sex with me and then kill me. They abused my slave wife and raped her all night, and she died. ⁶I took her body home and cut it into pieces. Then I sent one piece to each area of Israel, because I wanted you all to know about this wicked and disgraceful thing that has been done here in Israel. ⁷So now, all you Israelite people, speak, and tell me what you think should be done!"

⁸All the people stood up, and unitedly said, "None of us will go home! Not one of us will return to his house! ⁹This is what we must do to the people of Gibeah. First, we will cast lots to determine which group should attack them.

¹⁰We will choose one tenth of our number to get supplies we will need to punish Gibeah for the terrible thing that they have done here in Israel." ¹¹And all the Israelite people agreed that the people of Gibeah should be punished.

¹²Then the Israelite men sent messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin. They demanded, "Do you realize that some of your men have done a very evil thing? ¹³Bring those wicked men to us, in order that we can execute them. By doing that, we will get rid of this evil thing that has happened in Israel."

But the people of the tribe of Benjamin paid no attention to their fellow Israelites. ¹⁴The men of the tribe of Benjamin left their cities and gathered at Gibeah to fight the other Israelites. ¹⁵In that one day the men of the tribe of Benjamin recruited twenty-six thousand fighting men. They also chose seven hundred men from Gibeah. ¹⁶From all those soldiers there were seven hundred men who were left-handed, and each of them could sling a stone without missing a target that was very small and as narrow as a hair.

¹⁷The soldiers of Israel, not including the soldiers from Benjamin, numbered 400,000 men. All of these were trained to fight with the sword, men experienced at fighting in war.

¹⁸Those other Israelites went up to Bethel and asked advice from God, "Which tribe should be the first to attack the men from the tribe of Benjamin?"

Yahweh answered, "The men from the tribe of Judah should go first."

¹⁹The next morning, the Israelite men went and set up their tents near Gibeah. ²⁰Then they went to fight against the men from the tribe of Benjamin, and stood in their positions for fighting a battle, facing Gibeah. ²¹The men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and fought against them, and they killed twenty-two thousand soldiers from Israel on that day. ²²But the soldiers of Israel encouraged themselves. Then they got ready to fight the next day in the same battle lines as on the first day. ²³Then they came together and begged Yahweh for help; they prayed until evening. They asked advice from Yahweh about what they should do: "Should we go again to fight against our brothers, the people of Benjamin?" Yahweh answered, "Attack them!" ²⁴The next day they again stood in their positions for fighting, just as they had done on the previous day. ²⁵The men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and attacked the Israelites, and killed eighteen thousand more of their men.

²⁶In the afternoon, all the people of Israel who had not been killed again went to Bethel. There they sat down and cried to Yahweh, and they fasted until it was evening. They brought some offerings which they burned completely on the altar, and they also brought some offerings to restore fellowship with Yahweh. ²⁷The people of Israel asked Yahweh,—for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸and Phinehas son of Eleazar, was the grandson of Aaron; he was serving before the ark in those days—"Should we go out to battle once more against the people of Benjamin, who are our brothers, or should we stop?" Yahweh said, "Attack! For tomorrow I will help you defeat them." ²⁹Israelite men set up an ambush in the fields around Gibeah. ³⁰The other Israelite men went and stood in their positions for fighting a battle just as they had done on the previous days. ³¹When the men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of the city to fight against them, the Israelite men retreated away from the city, and the men of the tribe of Benjamin pursued them. The men of the tribe of Benjamin killed many Israelites, like they had done before. They killed about thirty Israelites, who died in the fields and on the roads—one of the roads went to Bethel and another road went to Gibeah.

³²The men of the tribe of Benjamin said, "We are defeating them like we did before!" But then Israelite men did what they had planned. The main group of Israelite men retreated a short distance from the city, to trick the men of Gibeah and cause them to pursue the Israelite men along the roads outside the city.

³³The main group of Israelite men left their positions and retreated, and then they stood in their battle positions again at a place named Baal Tamar. Then the soldiers of Israel who had been hiding in secret places ran out from their places in Maareh Gibeah. ³⁴Then the other ten thousand Israelites came out from the places where they had been hiding, west of Gibeah, and attacked the city. They were men who had come from all parts of Israel. There was a very big battle. But the men of the tribe of Benjamin did not know that they were about to have a disastrous defeat. ³⁵Yahweh enabled the Israelite men to defeat the men of the tribe of Benjamin. They killed 25,100 of them, all of them were fighting men. ³⁶So the soldiers of Benjamin saw they were defeated. The men of Israel had allowed the Benjamites to advance, because they were relying on the men they had placed in hidden positions outside Gibeah to go out and shift the battle in their favor. ³⁷Then the men who were hiding got up and hurried and they rushed into Gibeah, and with their swords they killed everyone who lived in the city. ³⁸Now the arranged signal between the soldiers of Israel and the men hiding in secret would be that a great cloud of smoke would rise up out of the city.

³⁹By that time, the Israelite men had turned away from attacking, so the men of the tribe of Benjamin said, "We are winning the battle, as we did before!" ⁴⁰But then smoke from the burning buildings began to rise up from the city. The men of the tribe of Benjamin turned around and saw that the whole city was burning. ⁴¹Then the main group of Israelite men also saw the smoke, and they knew that the smoke signaled that they should turn around and begin to attack. The men of the tribe of Benjamin were very afraid, because they realized that they were about to have a disastrous defeat. ⁴²So the men of the tribe of Benjamin tried to run away toward the wilderness to escape from the Israelite men, but they were not able to escape, because the Israelite men who had burned the two cities came out of those cities and killed many of them. ⁴³They surrounded some of the men of the tribe of Benjamin, and pursued the others to the area east of Gibeah. ⁴⁴They killed eighteen thousand strong soldiers of the tribe of Benjamin. ⁴⁵Then the rest of the men of the tribe of Benjamin realized that they had been defeated. They ran toward the rock of Rimmon, but the Israelite men killed five thousand more men of the tribe of Benjamin who fell behind along the roads. They pursued the rest of them to Gidom, and they killed two thousand more.

⁴⁶Altogether, there were twenty-five thousand—men of the tribe of Benjamin who were killed, all of them were experienced fighting men. ⁴⁷But six hundred men of the tribe of Benjamin ran to the rock of Rimmon in the wilderness. They stayed there for four months. ⁴⁸Then the Israelite men went back to the land belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and killed the people in every city. They also killed all the animals, and destroyed everything else that they found there. And they burned all the cities that they came to.

Chapter 21

¹When the Israelite men had gathered at Mizpah before the battle started, they solemnly declared, "None of us will ever allow one of our daughters to marry any man from the tribe of Benjamin!" ²But now the Israelites went to Bethel and cried loudly to Yahweh all day until the sun went down. ³They kept saying, "Yahweh, God of us Israelite people, one of the tribes of us Israelites does not exist anymore! Why has this happened to us?"

⁴Early the next morning the people built an altar. Then they completely burned some sacrifices on the altar, and also offered other sacrifices to restore fellowship with God.

⁵Then, because they had solemnly declared that anyone who did not meet with them at Mizpah to help fight the men of the tribe of Benjamin would be killed, they asked among themselves, "Were there any of the tribes of Israel who did not come to Mizpah to meet with us in the presence of Yahweh?"

⁶The Israelites felt sorry for their fellow Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin. They said, "Today one of our Israelite tribes has been cut off from Israel. ⁷What can we do to make certain that the men of the tribe of Benjamin who

were not killed will have wives?" Yahweh heard us solemnly declare that we would not allow any of our daughters to marry any man from the tribe of Benjamin. ⁸Then one of them asked, "Which of the tribes of Israel did not send any men here to Mizpah?" ⁹They realized that when the soldiers were counted, there was no one who had come from the city of Jabesh Gilead.

¹⁰So all the Israelites decided to send twelve thousand very good soldiers to Jabesh Gilead to kill the people there, even the women and the children. ¹¹They told this to those men: "This is what you must do: You must kill every man in Jabesh Gilead. You must also kill every married woman. But do not kill the unmarried women." ¹²So those soldiers went to Jabesh Gilead and killed all the men, married women, and the children. But they found four hundred virgin young women there. So they brought them to their camp at Shiloh in Canaan, across the river from the region of Gilead that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

¹³Then all the Israelites who had gathered sent a message to the six hundred men who were at the rock of Rimmon. They said that they would like to make peace with them. ¹⁴So the men came back from the rock of Rimmon. The Israelites gave to them the young women from Jabesh Gilead. But there were only four hundred women. There were not enough women for those six hundred men.

¹⁵The Israelites still felt sorry for the men of the tribe of Benjamin, because Yahweh had set the other tribes against them. ¹⁶The Israelite leaders said, "We have killed all the married women of the tribe of Benjamin. Where can we get women to be wives of the men who are still alive?" ¹⁷These men must have wives to give birth to children, in order that their families of Benjamin will continue. If that does not happen, all the people of one of the tribes of Israel will all die out, and the tribe will be destroyed. ¹⁸But we cannot allow our daughters to marry these men, because we solemnly declared that Yahweh will curse anyone who gives one of his daughters to become a wife of any man of the tribe of Benjamin." ¹⁹Then they had an idea. They said, "Every year there is a festival to honor Yahweh at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel and east of the road that extends from Bethel to Shechem, and it is south of the city of Lebonah."

²⁰So the Israelite leaders told the men of the tribe of Benjamin, "When it is the time for that festival, go to Shiloh and hide in the vineyards. ²¹Keep watching for the young women to come out of the city to dance. When they come out, run out of the vineyards. Each of you can seize one of the young women of Shiloh. Then you can all return to your homes with those women. ²²If their fathers or brothers come to us and complain about what you have done, we will say to them, 'Act kindly toward the men of the tribe of Benjamin. When we fought them, we did not leave any women alive to become their wives, and you did not give those young women to the men from the tribe of Benjamin. They stole them. So you will not be guilty, even though you said that you would not give any of your daughters to marry one of them.'"

²³So that is what the men of the tribe of Benjamin did. They went to Shiloh at the time of the festival. And when the young women were dancing, each man caught one of them and took her away and married her. Then they took their wives back to the land that God had given to them. They rebuilt their cities that had been burned down, and they lived there.

²⁴The other Israelites went to their home in the areas where their tribes and clans lived, the areas that God had allotted to them.

²⁵At that time, the Israelite people did not have a king. Everyone did what was right according to his own opinion.

Ruth

Chapter 1

¹During the time that judges ruled Israel, there was a famine in that country. A man from the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judah in the country of Israel left there and went to live for a while in the country of Moab. His wife and his two sons went with him. ²The man's name was Elimelek and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were part of the clan of Ephrathah, from Bethlehem, in Judah. They came to the land of Moab and stayed there. ³Then Naomi's husband, Elimelek, died, and Naomi had only her two sons with her. ⁴The sons married women from Moab. The name of one woman was Orpah, and the name of the other woman was Ruth. But after they had lived in that area for about ten years, ⁵Mahlon and Kilion also died. So then Naomi was alone without her sons or husband.

⁶One day while Naomi was in Moab, she heard someone say that Yahweh had helped his people and that now there was plenty of food in Israel. So she got ready to return to Bethlehem with her two daughters-in-law. ⁷They left the place where they had been living and started to travel back to the land of Judah. ⁸As they were walking, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Each of you should turn around and go back to your mother's home. I am asking Yahweh to be as faithful to you as you have been to our dead husbands and to me. ⁹I am asking Yahweh to allow each of you to have another husband with whom you will have a secure home." Then she kissed each of them, and they cried aloud. ¹⁰They each said, "No! We will return with you to your relatives."

¹¹But Naomi said, "No, my daughters. Return home. It will not do any good for you to come with me! It is not possible for me to have more sons who could become your husbands. ¹²You should go back, my daughters. It is too late for me to have another husband. Even if I thought that I could have another husband, and was married even tonight and had more sons, ¹³you would not wait until they grew up! You could not remain unmarried until then! No, my daughters, Yahweh has struck me, making my life very bitter. But your lives do not need to be as bitter as mine."

¹⁴Then Ruth and Orpah cried loudly again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and left, but Ruth stayed with Naomi. ¹⁵Naomi said to her, "Look! Your sister-in-law is going back to her relatives and to her gods! Go back with her!" ¹⁶But Ruth replied, "No! Please do not insist that I let you go or that I turn around and stop following you! Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you stay, I will stay. Your relatives will be my relatives, and I will worship the God you worship. ¹⁷Wherever you die, there I will die and they will bury me there. May Yahweh punish me severely if I leave you before I die." ¹⁸When Naomi realized that Ruth was set on going with her, she stopped urging her to return home.

¹⁹So the two women continued walking until they came to the town of Bethlehem. When they got there, many people in the town began shouting loudly about them. The women of the town exclaimed, "It is hard to believe that this is Naomi!" ²⁰Naomi said to them, "You should not call me Naomi any more, because it means 'pleasant.' Instead, call me Mara, because it means 'bitter.' God Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹When I left, I had everything I could want, but Yahweh has brought me back without anything. Do not call me Naomi. Yahweh has opposed me. Almighty God has treated me badly."

²²So that is how Naomi returned home along with her daughter-in-law Ruth, the woman from Moab. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the barley harvest was just starting.

Chapter 2

¹There was a man there who was a relative of Naomi's dead husband. He was rich and important, and a member of Elimelek's clan. His name was Boaz. ²Ruth (the woman from Moab) said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the grain that the harvesters leave behind. I will go behind any harvester who gives me permission." Naomi replied, "Go ahead, my daughter." ³So Ruth went. When she got to the fields, she followed the harvesters and picked up grain. That part of the field just happened to belong to Boaz, Elimelek's relative.

⁴Then Boaz returned from town. He greeted the harvesters, saying, "May Yahweh be with you!" They replied, "May Yahweh bless you!"

⁵Then Boaz saw Ruth, and asked the foreman, "Who is that young woman related to?" ⁶The foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who returned from there with Naomi. ⁷She said to me, 'Please let me pick up the grain that the men who are harvesting leave behind.' She has worked since early this morning until right now, as she rests for a short time under the shelter." ⁸Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Young lady, please listen to me. You do not need to go to any other field or anywhere else to gather grain. You should stay right here with my servant girls. ⁹Watch where the men are harvesting, and follow along behind my servant girls. I have told the men who are harvesting not to assault you. Whenever you are thirsty, go and get some water to drink from the jars that the men have filled."

¹⁰Then she knelt before him with her face touching the ground. She exclaimed, "Why are you being so kind to me? I did not think you would pay any attention to me, since I am a foreigner!" ¹¹Boaz replied, "People have told me about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. They told me that you left your parents and your homeland, and you came here to live among people whom you did not previously know. ¹²I pray that Yahweh will fully repay you for what you have done. Yes, may Yahweh, the God of Israel, the one whom you are trusting to protect you, reward you in full."

¹³She replied, "Sir, I hope I will continue to please you. You have comforted me by being so kind to me, your servant, and yet I am not even one of your servant girls!"

¹⁴When it was time to eat, Boaz said to her, "Come over here and get some food. Take this bread and dip it in the vinegar and eat it." Then, when she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all that she wanted and had some left over. ¹⁵After she stood up to go back to work, Boaz ordered his workers, "Even if she gathers some grain near the bundles of grain that you have cut, do not try to stop her. ¹⁶Even more than that, I want you to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them on the ground for her to pick up, and do not scold her."

¹⁷So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley that she had gathered, to separate the kernels from the stalks. The barley kernels were enough to fill a large basket. ¹⁸She carried it back to town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had gathered. She also gave her mother-in-law the roasted grain that was left over from her lunch. ¹⁹Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you gather all this grain today? In whose field did you work? I pray that God will bless the man who was so kind to you." Then Ruth told her about the person she had worked with. She said, "The name of the man who owns the field where I worked today is Boaz." ²⁰Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May Yahweh bless him! Yahweh has not stopped acting faithfully toward us who are still living, and to our husbands who have died." Then she added, "That man is a close relative of Elimelek; in fact, he is one of those responsible for taking care of our family."

²¹Then Ruth, the woman from Moab, said, "He also told me, 'Stay with my workers until they are done bringing in all my grain from the field.'"

²²Naomi replied to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it will be good for you to go to his field with his servant girls, because if you go to someone else's field, someone might assault you."

²³So Ruth worked alongside of Boaz's servant girls. She gathered heads of grain until the workers had finished harvesting both the barley and the wheat. During that time, she continued to live with Naomi.

Chapter 3

¹One day, Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I want to arrange for you to have a secure home with a good husband. ²Now, you have been working with Boaz's servant girls. As you know, he is a close relative of ours. So listen carefully. Tonight he will be at the place where they thresh the barley. He will be separating the grain from the chaff. ³Bathe yourself and put on some perfume. Put on your full outer cloak. Then go down to the place where they thresh the grain. But do not let him know that you are there until he is finished eating and drinking. ⁴When he lies down to sleep, pay attention to where he lies down. Then go over to him, uncover his feet, and lie down there. When he wakes up, he will tell you what to do."

⁵Ruth replied, "I will do everything that you have told me to do." ⁶So she went down to the place where they thresh the grain. There she did everything that her mother-in-law had told her to do.

⁷When Boaz finished eating and drinking, he was feeling good. He went over to the far end of the grain pile, lay down there, and went to sleep. Then Ruth stealthily approached him. She took the covering off his feet and lay down there. ⁸In the middle of the night, he woke up suddenly. He sat up and realized that a woman was lying at his feet. ⁹He asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am your servant, Ruth. Since you are the one responsible for my dead husband's family, please make me secure by marrying me."

¹⁰Boaz replied, "May Yahweh bless you, my dear! Previously, you were very faithful to your mother-in-law, but you are acting even more faithfully now by not chasing after a young man to marry, whether rich or poor. ¹¹Now, my dear, I will do everything that you asked. Do not be afraid, because all the people in this town know that you are an honorable woman. ¹²However, while I am one of Naomi's close relatives and, therefore, responsible for you both, there is another man who is more responsible for you than I am because he is more closely related to Naomi.

¹³You stay here for the rest of the night. Tomorrow morning I will tell this man about you. If he says that he will take care of you, fine, he can marry you. But if he is not willing to take care of you, I solemnly promise that, as surely as Yahweh lives, I will marry you and take care of you myself. So stay here until it is morning."

¹⁴Then Boaz added, "It would be best if no one knew that a woman came here." So she lay at his feet until early morning and got up to leave before it was light enough that people would be able to recognize her. ¹⁵Then Boaz said to her, "Bring your cloak over here and hold it out." When she did that, he poured a generous amount of barley into it and put it on her back. Then he went into town.

¹⁶When Ruth arrived home, her mother-in-law asked her, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then Ruth told her everything that Boaz had said and done for her. ¹⁷She also said to Naomi, "He gave me all this barley, saying, 'I do not want you to return to your mother-in-law with nothing.'" ¹⁸Then Naomi said, "My daughter, just wait here until we see what happens. That man will certainly take care of this today."

Chapter 4

¹Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the place inside the town gate where people conducted their official business. He sat down there. Before long, the close relative that Boaz had mentioned came along. Boaz called out to him by name, and said, "Come over here and sit down." So the man came over and sat down. ²Boaz then gathered ten of the older, well-respected men from the town, and said to them, "Please sit here so you can witness our business." So they sat down. ³Then Boaz said to his relative, "Did you know that the field that belonged to our relative Elimelek is for sale? Naomi, who recently returned from Moab, is selling it. ⁴I thought that I should tell you so you can take possession of it here in front of these respected men who have agreed to be witnesses. If you wish to buy it back into the family, then do so. But if you do not wish to buy it back, then let me know, because you are the closest

relative to Elimelek, and I am next after you." The man replied, "I will take it!" ⁵Then Boaz told him, "When you buy the land from Naomi, you will also need to marry Ruth, our relative's widow from Moab, in order that she may have a son to inherit the property and carry on the name of her dead husband." ⁶Then the nearer relative said, "Then I cannot buy it back myself. If I did that, I would ruin my own son's inheritance. You may be responsible for the land and the woman in my place. I cannot do it."

⁷(At that time, it was the custom in Israel that, when two people agreed to redeem or exchange anything between them, one man would take off one of his sandals and give it to the other man. That was the way they completed transactions in Israel.) ⁸So the relative said to Boaz, "You buy the field yourself!" And he took off one of his sandals and gave it to Boaz.

⁹Then Boaz said to the respected men and to all the other people who were there, "Today you have all seen that I have bought from Naomi all the property that belonged to Elimelek, Kilion, and Mahlon. ¹⁰I am also taking Ruth, Mahlon's widow from Moab, to be my wife. This is in order that she may give birth to a son who will be considered Mahlon's son. He will inherit the property and carry on the family name among his relatives and here in his hometown. Today you have seen and heard these things, and can speak of them to anyone who asks about them."

¹¹All the respected men, and the others who were sitting at the town gate, agreed and said, "Yes, we have seen and heard. We pray that Yahweh will allow this woman, who will be coming into your home, to be like Rachel and Leah, the two who bore our ancestors and started our people, Israel. We desire that you become rich in the clan of Ephrathah and famous here in Bethlehem. ¹²We pray that your family will be like the family of your ancestor Perez, son of Judah and Tamar, because of the many descendants that Yahweh will give to you and this young woman."

¹³So Boaz took Ruth to be his wife and had sex with her. Yahweh enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴The women of Bethlehem said to Naomi, "Praise Yahweh for giving you a man to preserve your family today. We desire that people throughout Israel will know his name. ¹⁵Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who has been better to you than if you had seven sons, has given birth to him. Therefore, he will make you feel young again, and he will take care of you when you become old."

¹⁶Then Naomi picked up the baby and held him close, and became a second mother for him. ¹⁷The women who were living nearby said, "It is as though Naomi now has a son!" They named him Obed. Later, Obed became the father of Jesse, who became the father of David. ¹⁸Here is a list of the descendants of Perez: Perez's son was Hezron. ¹⁹Hezron's son was Ram. Ram's son was Amminadab. ²⁰Amminadab's son was Nahshon. Nahshon's son was Salmon. ²¹Salmon's son was Boaz. Boaz's son was Obed. ²²Obed's son was Jesse. Jesse's son was David.

1 Samuel

Chapter 1

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

³{Once} every year Elkanah went up {with his family} from Ramah to the city of Shiloh. He would go there to worship Yahweh, {commander of the angel} armies, and offer sacrifices to him. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, {helped their father to do the work as} priests of Yahweh there. ⁴Each time Elkanah offered sacrifices {there}, he would give some of the {meat} to Peninnah and some to each of her sons and daughters. ⁵But he gave a larger amount of {meat} to Hannah because he loved her {very much}, even though Yahweh had not {permitted} her to give birth to any {children}. ⁶But his other wife, Peninnah, would mock Hannah to make her feel miserable, reminding her Yahweh had not allowed her to bear children. ⁷This happened every year. When they went up to the temple of Yahweh at Shiloh, Peninnah always ridiculed Hannah so much that Hannah cried and would not eat. ⁸Then Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why are you eating nothing? You are so sad! Surely it is better for you to have me as your husband than to have even ten sons!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 2

¹Then Hannah prayed, saying,

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

I am strong because I belong to you.

I laugh at my enemies

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

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

There is no other god like you.

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

³You people who oppose God, stop boasting!

Yahweh is a God who knows everything,

and he will evaluate everyone's actions.

So do not speak so arrogantly!

⁴Yahweh, you destroy the weapons of mighty soldiers,

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

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

The woman who could not have any children before, now has given birth to many children, and the woman who had many children before, now is very lonely because they have all died.

⁶Yahweh, you cause some people to die,

and you restore some people who were almost dead.

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

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

you humble some people, and you honor some people.

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

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

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

¹⁰Yahweh, you will break into pieces those who oppose you.
You will cause thunder in the sky to show that you oppose them.
Yahweh, you will judge people everywhere, even those who live in the most remote places on the earth.
You will give strength to the king whom you will appoint, and give him great power over his enemies."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 5

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 8

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 14

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²²But Samuel replied,

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

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

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

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

So, because you disobeyed what Yahweh told you to do, he has declared that you will no longer be king."

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

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

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

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

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

³³But Samuel said to him,

"You have killed the sons of many women with your sword, so now your mother will no longer have a son."

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

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

Chapter 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 21

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Saul has killed thousands of his enemies,

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

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

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

Chapter 22

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 25

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 26

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 28

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saul replied, "Cause Samuel to appear."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 29

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

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

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

'Saul has killed a thousand of our enemies,

but David has killed ten thousand of them?'"

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

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

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

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

Chapter 30

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 31

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Samuel

Chapter 1

¹After Saul died, David and the men who were with him returned to the town of Ziklag after defeating the descendants of Amalek. They stayed in Ziklag for two days. ²On the third day, a man unexpectedly arrived there who had been in Saul's army. He had torn his clothes and put dust on his head to show that he was grieving. He came to David and prostrated himself on the ground in front of David to show respect for him.

³David asked him, "Where have you come from?" The man replied, "From the Israelite army."

⁴David asked him, "What happened? Tell me about the battle!" The man replied, "Our soldiers ran away. Many of them were killed. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."

⁵David said to the young man, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?"

⁶The young man replied, "I was on Mount Gilboa where the fighting was. I saw Saul; he was leaning on his spear. The enemy chariots and their drivers were coming very close to him. ⁷Saul turned around and saw me, and he called out to me. I answered him and said, 'What do you want me to do?'

⁸He replied, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am a descendant of Amalek.'

⁹Then he said to me, 'Come over here and kill me. I am in very much pain.'

¹⁰So I went to him and killed him, because I saw that he was wounded very badly and would not continue to live. I took the crown from his head and his armband, which I have brought to you, my master."

¹¹Then David took hold of his clothing and he tore it apart, and all the men who were with him tore their clothes apart as well. ¹²They tore their clothing because they were very sad and they refused to eat anything until evening because they remembered that Saul and his son Jonathan had died, and that so many of the people of Yahweh had died, and they were sad because of the great dangers the descendants of Israel had gone through, and because so many of them died in battle.

¹³But David asked the young man who had told him about the battle, "Where are you from?" He replied, "My father is a descendant of Amalek, but we live in Israel."

¹⁴David asked him, "Why were you not afraid that you would be punished if you killed Saul, whom Yahweh made king? ¹⁵⁻¹⁶You yourself said, 'I killed the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king.' So you have made yourself guilty; you deserve to die!" Then David summoned one of his soldiers and said to him, "Kill him!" So the soldier killed him.

¹⁷Then David composed this sad song about Saul and Jonathan, ¹⁸and he ordered the men with him to teach it to the people of Judah. The song is called "The Bow," and it has been written down in the Book of Jashar:

¹⁹"You Israelite people, your glorious leaders have been killed on the mountains!

It is very sad that these mighty men have died!

²⁰Do not tell it to our enemies in the region of Philistia.

Do not tell the people who live in the city of Gath.

Do not proclaim it in the streets of the city of Ashkelon, or their women would celebrate.

Do not allow those pagan women to rejoice.

²¹I hope there will be no rain or dew ever again on the mountains of Gilboa
and that no grain will grow in the fields there,
because it was there that the shield of Saul, the mighty king, fell to the ground.
Now there is no one to rub olive oil on Saul's shield.

²²Jonathan's arrows were his servants who always pierced his enemies and drew their blood.
and Saul's sword was his servant who always struck his enemies.

²³Saul and Jonathan were loved; they pleased many people.
They were together while they lived and when they died.
In battle they were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions.

²⁴You women in Israel, weep about Saul.
He provided beautiful scarlet clothes for you
and gave you gold ornaments to put on.

²⁵It is very sad that my brother Jonathan has died
He was a mighty soldiers, and his enemies killed him on the mountain.

²⁶Jonathan, my dear friend, I grieve for you.
You were very dear to me.
You loved me in a wonderful manner.
It was even better than the way that a woman loves her husband and her children.

²⁷It is very sad that these mighty men have died,
and that their weapons are now no more!

Chapter 2

¹Some time after that, David asked Yahweh, "Should I go up to one of the towns in Judah?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, go up there." Then David asked, "To which town should I go?" Yahweh replied, "To Hebron."

²So David went up there, taking his two wives, Ahinoam who was from the city of Jezreel, and Abigail, the widow of Nabal, who was from the city of Carmel. ³He also took the men who had been with him, together with their families. They all started to live in the city of Hebron and its surrounding villages. ⁴Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and one of them poured olive oil on David's head to show they were appointing him to be the king of the tribe of Judah.

When David found out that the people of the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead had buried Saul's body, ⁵he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh to tell them, "I desire that Yahweh will bless you for having buried Saul. By doing this, you have shown that you were loyal to him. ⁶Now I also desire that Yahweh will faithfully love you and be loyal to you. And I will do good things for you because of what you have done for Saul. ⁷Now, although Saul your king is dead, be strong and courageous, like the people of Judah, who have appointed me to be their king."

⁸However, Ner's son Abner, the commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ishbosheth and went across the Jordan River to the city of Mahanaim. ⁹There Abner proclaimed that Ishbosheth was now the king ruling the regions of Gilead and Jezreel, and the tribes of Asher, Ephraim, and Benjamin. That meant that he was the king of most of Israel.

¹⁰Ishbosheth was forty years old when he started to rule over the Israelite people. He ruled them for two years. But the tribe of Judah was loyal to David. ¹¹David ruled them for seven and a half years while he was living in Hebron.

¹²One day Abner and the officials of Ishbosheth went from Mahanaim across the Jordan River to the city of Gibeon. ¹³Joab, whose mother was Zeruiah, and some of David's officials went from Hebron to Gibeon, and they met at the pool of water there. They all sat down, one group on one side of the pool and the other group on the other side.

¹⁴Abner said to Joab, "Let us tell some of our young men to fight each other!" Joab replied, "Very well!"

¹⁵So twelve men from the tribe of Benjamin fought for Ishbosheth, against twelve of David's soldiers. ¹⁶Each of them grabbed the head of the man against whom he was fighting, and thrust his sword into that man's side. The result was that all twenty-four of them fell down dead. So that area in Gibeon is now called "Field of Swords."

¹⁷Then the others started to fight also. It was a very fierce battle. Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's soldiers.

¹⁸Zeruiah's three sons were there on that day: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel was able to run very fast. He could run as fast as a wild gazelle. ¹⁹Asahel started to pursue Abner. He ran straight toward Abner, without stopping.

²⁰Abner looked behind him, and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" Asahel replied, "Yes!"

²¹Abner shouted, "Stop chasing me; go after someone else!" But Asahel would not stop pursuing Abner.

²²So Abner yelled at him again, "Stop chasing me! Why should I kill you? How could I face your brother Joab and explain your death to him?"

²³But Asahel refused to stop pursuing Abner. So Abner suddenly turned and thrust the butt end of his spear into Asahel's stomach. Because he thrust it very strongly, that end of the spear went through his body and came out at Asahel's back, and he fell to the ground, dead. All the other soldiers who came to the place where his body was lying stopped and stood there, stunned at Asahel's body.

²⁴But Joab and Abishai continued to pursue Abner. At sunset they came to the hill of Ammah, which is east of Giah, along the road to the wilderness near Gibeon. ²⁵The men from the tribe of Benjamin gathered around Abner in a line of battle and stood at the top of a hill.

²⁶Then Abner called out to Joab, saying, "Are we going to continue to fight forever? Do you not realize that if we continue fighting the result will be very bad? We are all descendants of Jacob, so we should stop fighting each other! How long will it be until you tell your soldiers to stop pursuing us?"

²⁷Joab replied, "Just as surely as God lives, if you had not said that, my soldiers would have continued pursuing your men until tomorrow morning!"

²⁸So Joab blew a trumpet to signal that they should stop fighting. So all his men stopped pursuing the soldiers of Israel.

²⁹That night Abner and his soldiers went through the plain along the Jordan River. They crossed the Jordan and marched all the next morning, and they finally arrived back at Mahanaim.

³⁰Joab and his soldiers gathered together after they stopped chasing Abner. Then Joab found out that in addition to Asahel, only nineteen of them had been killed in the battle. ³¹But David's soldiers had killed 360 of Abner's men, all from the tribe of Benjamin. ³²Some of Joab's soldiers took Asahel's body and buried it in the tomb where his father

had been buried, in Bethlehem. Then they marched all during the night, and at dawn they arrived back home at Hebron.

Chapter 3

¹After that, a long war developed between those who wanted Saul's son to be their king and those who wanted David to be their king. But more and more people began to want David, while fewer and fewer wanted Saul's son.

²David's wives gave birth to six sons at Hebron. The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam from the city of Jezreel.

³The next son was Kileab, whose mother was Abigail, the widow of Nabal, from the city of Carmel.

The next son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king of the region of Geshur.

⁴The next son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith.

The next son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital.

⁵The youngest son was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah, another one of David's wives.

These sons of David were all born in Hebron.

⁶During the conflict between those who wanted Saul's son to rule over them and those who wanted David to rule over them, Abner was becoming more influential among those who wanted Saul's son to be the king. ⁷Saul had as one of his wives a slave woman named Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. But one day Abner slept with her. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you slept with my father's slave wife?"

⁸Abner became very angry about what Ishbosheth said to him. He said to Ishbosheth, "Do you think that I am a worthless dog from Judah? From the beginning I have been loyal to Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends. And I have kept David's army from defeating you. So now why are you criticizing me about what I have done with some woman?" ⁹⁻¹⁰Yahweh solemnly promised that he would not allow Saul and his descendants to continue to rule. He promised that he would cause David to rule over all the tribes of Israel and Judah, from the city of Dan far in the north to the city of Beersheba far in the south. So I hope that God will kill me if I do not enable that to happen!" ¹¹Ishbosheth was very afraid of Abner, so he did not say anything to reply to Abner.

¹²Then Abner sent messengers to David when he was at Hebron to say to him, "Either you or I should be the ruler of this entire nation, but not Ishbosheth. However, if you make an agreement with me, I will help you by encouraging all the people of Israel to ask for you to be their king." ¹³David sent back this reply, "Good! I am willing to make an agreement with you. But before that happens, there is one thing that you must do. When you come to see me, you must bring my wife Michal, Saul's daughter." ¹⁴Then David sent messengers to Ishbosheth to say to him, "I killed one hundred men from Philistia and cut off their foreskins to give to Saul to pay for Michal to be my wife. So now give her back to me!"

¹⁵So Ishbosheth sent some men to take Michal from her husband Paltiel. But when they took her, her husband followed them all the way to the city of Bahurim, crying as he went. ¹⁶Then Abner turned and said to him, "Go back home!" so he did.

¹⁷Abner went to the Israelite leaders and talked with them. He said, "You have wanted David to be your king for a long time. ¹⁸So now you have an opportunity for this to happen. Keep in mind that Yahweh promised this, 'With the help of David, who serves me well, I will rescue my people from the power of all their other enemies'." ¹⁹Abner also spoke to the people of the tribe of Benjamin. Then he went to Hebron to tell David what all the people of Israel and the people of the tribe of Benjamin had agreed to do.

²⁰When Abner came with twenty of his soldiers to see David at Hebron, David made a feast for all of them.

²¹Afterwards, Abner said to David, "Sir, I will now go and encourage all the people of Israel to accept you to be their king, as you have desired." Then Abner left, peacefully.

²²Soon after that, Joab and some of David's other soldiers returned to Hebron after raiding one of their enemy's villages, bringing with them a lot of things that they had captured. But Abner was not there at Hebron, because David had already sent him safely away. ²³When Joab and the soldiers who were with him arrived, someone told him that Abner had come there and talked with the king, and that the king allowed Abner to go away safely.

²⁴So Joab went to the king and said, "Why have you done that? Listen to me! Abner is your enemy, but when he came to you, you allowed him to leave! ²⁵Do you not know that he came to you to deceive you and to find out everything that you are doing, and all the places that you go to?"

²⁶After Joab left David, he sent some messengers to get Abner. They found him at the well of Sirah and brought him back to Hebron, but David did not know that they had done this. ²⁷So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab met him at the city gate, and took him into a side room as though he wanted to speak with him privately. Then he stabbed Abner in the stomach with his knife. In that way he murdered Abner because Abner had killed Joab's brother Asahel.

²⁸Later, after David heard what had happened, he said, "Yahweh knows that I and the people of my kingdom are not at all responsible for Abner. ²⁹I hope that there will always be someone in his family who has sores, or someone who is a leper, or some man who is forced to do women's work, or someone who is killed in a battle, or someone who does not have enough food to eat!"

³⁰That is how Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

³¹Then David said to Joab and to all Joab's soldiers, "Tear your clothes and put on coarse cloth to show that you are sad, and mourn for Abner!" And at the funeral, King David walked behind the men who were carrying the coffin.

³²They buried Abner's body at Hebron. And at the grave, the king cried loudly, and all the other people also cried.

³³David sang this sad song to lament for Abner:

"It is not right that Abner should have died in disgrace!

³⁴No one tied his hands or put chains on his feet, as they do to criminals.

No, he was murdered by wicked men!"

³⁵Then many people came to David to tell him to eat some food before sunset, but David refused. He said, "I hope that God will kill me if I eat any food before the sun goes down!" ³⁶All the people saw what David did, and they were pleased. Truly, everything that the king did pleased the people.

³⁷So all the people realized that the king had not wanted Abner to be killed. ³⁸The king said to his officials, "Do you not realize that a leader and a great man has died today in Israel? ³⁹Even though Yahweh appointed me to be the king, today I feel weak. These two sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai, are very violent. I cannot control them. So I hope that Yahweh will punish them severely in return for this wicked deed that they have done!"

Chapter 4

¹When Saul's son Ishbosheth heard that Abner had been killed at Hebron, he became very discouraged, and all the Israelite people with him. ²Ishbosheth had two officers who were leaders of groups of soldiers. They were brothers with the names of Baanah and Recab; they were sons of Rimmon from the town of Beeroth in the tribe of

Benjamin. Now Beeroth is in the area that had been assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. ³But the original inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to the town of Gittaim, where they still live.

⁴Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was five years old when Saul and Jonathan died in the battle. When people brought that news from Jezreel, Mephibosheth's nursemaid picked him up and ran away, but she ran very fast and she dropped him, and he became crippled in his legs.

⁵One day, Recab and Baanah left their home to go to Ishbosheth's house. They arrived there about noontime, when Ishbosheth was taking his midday nap. ⁶The woman who was serving as the doorkeeper was sifting wheat; but she became sleepy and then fell asleep. So Recab and his brother Baanah were able to creep in quietly.

⁷They entered Ishbosheth's bedroom, where he was sleeping. They killed him with their swords and cut off his head. They carried his head and walked all night through the plain along the Jordan. ⁸They took the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron. They said to him, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul, who tried to kill you. Your Majesty, today Yahweh has allowed you to get revenge on Saul and his descendants!"

⁹But David replied to them, "Just as surely as Yahweh lives—and he is the one who has rescued me from all trouble, I will tell you this: ¹⁰When a messenger came to Ziklag and told me 'Saul is dead!' (and he thought that the news that he was bringing to me was good news), I told one of my soldiers to kill him. That was the reward I gave to him for his news! ¹¹So because you two evil men have murdered a man who did nothing wrong—and you killed him when he was sleeping on his bed in his own house, I will do something worse to you. I will surely get revenge on you two for murdering him, and wipe you off from the earth!"

¹²Then David gave a command to his soldiers, and they killed the two men, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hung their bodies on a pole near the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it respectfully in the tomb of Abner, there at Hebron.

Chapter 5

¹Then the leaders of all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said to him, "Listen, we have the same ancestors that you do. ²In the past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led our soldiers into battle. You are the one to whom Yahweh promised, 'You will be the leader of my people. You will be their king.'"

³So while Yahweh was listening, all those leaders of the people of Israel declared there at Hebron that David would be their king. And David made an with them. They anointed him with olive oil to set him apart to be the king of the Israelites. ⁴David was thirty years old when he became their king. He ruled them for forty years. ⁵In Hebron he had ruled over the tribe of Judah for seven and a half years, and in Jerusalem he would rule over all the people of Judah and Israel for thirty-three years.

⁶One day King David and his soldiers went to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebus people group who lived there. The people there thought that David's army would not be able to capture the city, so they said to David, "Your army will never be able to get inside our city! Even the blind and crippled people can stop you!" ⁷But David's army did indeed capture the fortress on Mount Zion; later it was known as the city of David. ⁸On that day, David said to his soldiers, "Those who want to get rid of the Jebus people should go through the water tunnel to enter the city. That is where my enemies are, even my enemies who are 'crippled people and blind people.'" That is why people say, "Those who are 'blind and crippled' are not allowed to go into David's palace."

⁹After David and his soldiers captured the city with its strong walls around it, he lived there, and they named it the city of David. David and his soldiers built the city around the fortress, starting where the land was filled in on the east side of the hill. ¹⁰David continued to become more and more powerful because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, was helping him.

¹¹One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent ambassadors to David to talk about making an agreement between their countries. Hiram agreed to provide cedar trees to make lumber, and he also agreed that he would send carpenters and masons to build a palace for David. ¹²Because Hiram did these things, David realized that Yahweh had truly appointed him to be the king of Israel. He also realized that because Yahweh loved the Israelites and chosen them to belong to himself, he had increased David's own power as king.

¹³After David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, he took more slave women to be his wives, and he also married other women. All of those women gave birth to more sons and daughters. ¹⁴The names of his sons who were born in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ¹⁵Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, ¹⁶Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

¹⁷When the Philistine people heard that David had been made king of Israel, their army went up toward Jerusalem to try to capture David. But David heard that they were coming, so he went down to another fortified place. ¹⁸The army of Philistia arrived at the Valley of Rephaim southwest of Jerusalem and spread themselves out inside it.

¹⁹David asked Yahweh, "Should my men and I attack the Philistine army? Will you enable us to defeat them?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, attack them, because I will certainly enable your army to defeat them."

²⁰So David and his army went to where the Philistine army was, and there they defeated them. Then David said, "Yahweh has burst through my enemies like a flood." So that place is called Baal Perazim. ²¹The Philistine men left their idols there, and David and his soldiers took them away.

²²Then the Philistine army returned to the Valley of Rephaim and spread all over the valley once again. ²³So again David asked Yahweh if his army should attack them. But Yahweh replied, "Do not attack them from here. Tell your men to go around them and attack them from the other side, near the balsam trees. ²⁴When you hear something in the tops of the balsam trees that sounds like an army marching, attack them. Then you will know that I will have gone ahead of you to enable your army to defeat their army." ²⁵So David did what Yahweh told him to do, and his army defeated the Philistine army and chased it from the city of Geba all the way west to the city of Gezer.

Chapter 6

¹Then David chose thirty thousand Israelite men and gathered them together. ²He led them to the place in Judah formerly called Baalah, now called Kiriath Jearim. They went in order to bring the sacred chest to Jerusalem, the chest that had the name of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, written on it, and that had the figures of the winged creatures on top of it. Between those statues was where Yahweh himself was present, though he remained unseen. ³The sacred chest was in the house of Abinadab, on top of a hill. They went there, and put the chest on a new cart. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's two sons, were guiding the oxen that were pulling the cart. ⁴Uzzah walked alongside the cart, and Ahio walked in front of it. ⁵David and all the Israelite men were celebrating in God's presence, singing with all their strength and playing wooden lyres and harps, and beating tambourines, and clashing castanets and cymbals.

⁶But when they came to the place where Nakon threshed grain, the oxen stumbled. So Uzzah put his hand on the sacred chest to steady it. ⁷Yahweh immediately became very angry with Uzzah, and killed him right there alongside the sacred chest, because he had touched the chest.

⁸But David was angry because Yahweh had punished Uzzah. So ever since that time, that place has been called Perez Uzzah.

⁹Then David was afraid of what else Yahweh would do to punish them, so he said, "How can I take the sacred chest with me to Jerusalem?" ¹⁰So he decided not to take the sacred chest to Jerusalem. Instead, they took it to another place, the house of Obed Edom the Gittite. ¹¹They left the sacred chest in the house of Obed Edom for three months, and during that time Yahweh blessed him and his family.

¹²Some time later, people told David, "Yahweh has blessed Obed Edom and his family because he is taking care of the sacred chest!" When David heard that, he and some other men went to Obed Edom's house, and very joyfully brought the sacred chest from there to Jerusalem. ¹³When the men who were carrying the sacred chest had walked six steps, they stopped, and there David killed a bull and a fat calf, and offered them to Yahweh as a sacrifice.

¹⁴David was wearing only a linen cloth wrapped around his waist, and was dancing very energetically to honor Yahweh. ¹⁵David and the Israelite men took the sacred chest up to Jerusalem, shouting loudly and blowing trumpets.

¹⁶While they were carrying the sacred chest into the city, his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out the window of her house. She saw King David leaping and dancing to honor Yahweh. But she was disgusted with him.

¹⁷They brought the sacred chest into the tent that David had erected for it. Then David gave to Yahweh offerings to be completely burned on an altar, and other offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹⁸When David had finished offering those sacrifices, he asked Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to bless the people. ¹⁹He also distributed food to all the people. To each man and woman he gave a loaf of bread, some meat, and a raisin cake. Then they all returned to their homes.

²⁰When David went home to ask Yahweh to bless his family, his wife Michal came out to meet him. She said to him, "Maybe you, the king of Israel, think that you were acting in an honorable way today, but really, you acted like a fool. You were nearly naked in front of the female servants of your officials!"

²¹David replied to Michal, "I was doing that to honor Yahweh, who chose me instead of your father and other members of his family, to be the king of the Israelite people, the people who belong to Yahweh. And I will continue to dance to honor Yahweh! ²²Even though you think that what I did was disgraceful, I will continue to act in this way because I am willing to be made a fool in my own eyes. But the female servants whom you were talking about, they will give me honor!"

²³As a result, Saul's daughter never gave birth to any children.

Chapter 7

¹The king began to live in his palace. By now Yahweh had caused the enemy people groups to stop attacking Israel.

²One day David said to the prophet Nathan, "It is not right that I am here, living in a beautiful house made of cedar wood, but the chest that contains God's Ten Commandments is kept in a tent!"

³Then Nathan said to the king, "Yahweh is helping you, so do about the sacred chest whatever you think is right."

⁴But that night, Yahweh spoke to Nathan:

⁵"Go and tell my servant, David, that this is what Yahweh says to him: He is not the one who will build a temple for me to live in. ⁶I have not lived in any building from the day that I brought the Israelites up from Egypt until now. Instead, I have been living in my sacred tent, moving from one place to another with the people. ⁷Wherever I went with the Israelites as they traveled, I never said to any of the leaders whom I appointed to lead them, 'Why have you not built me a temple made of cedar wood?'

⁸So tell my servant David that Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, says that he took him from a pasture and from taking care of sheep, and appointed him to become the ruler of my Israelite people. ⁹Remind him I have been with him wherever he has gone. I have gotten rid of all his enemies who attacked him. I will make him very famous, as well known as the names of all the greatest men who have ever lived on the earth. ¹⁰⁻¹¹Formerly, during the time that I appointed leaders for my Israelite people, many violent groups oppressed them. But this will not happen anymore. I have chosen a place where my people can live peacefully and where no one will disturb them anymore. I will make all their enemies stop attacking them. And I will defeat all their enemies.

Tell David that I declare to him that I, Yahweh, will enable his descendants to rule after him. ¹²When he dies and is buried, I will appoint one of his own sons to be king, and I will make him to be a very powerful king. ¹³He is the one who will arrange for a temple to be built for me. I will make his rule over Israel to last forever. ¹⁴I will be like a father to him, and it will be as though he is a son to me. When he does something that is wrong, I will punish him as fathers punish their sons. ¹⁵But I will never stop faithfully loving him as I stopped loving Saul, whom I removed from being king before David became king. ¹⁶David's descendants will rule the kingdom of Israel forever. Their rule will never end."

¹⁷So Nathan told David everything that Yahweh had told him.

¹⁸When David heard Nathan's message, he went into the sacred tent and sat in Yahweh's presence, and prayed this:

"Yahweh, my God, I am not worthy of all the things that you have done for me, and my family is not worthy either.

¹⁹And now, O Yahweh my God, in addition to everything else, you have spoken about what will happen to my descendants in the future for many generations.

²⁰O Yahweh God, what more can I, David, say to you for honoring me? Although you know very well what I am like, Yahweh my God, you have acted toward me as though I were the most important man on the earth! ²¹You have done all these great things to teach me, and you have done them just because you wanted to do them and because you decided to do them.

²²O Yahweh my God, you are great. There is no one like you. Only you are God, just as we have always heard. ²³And there is no other nation in the world like Israel. Israel is the only nation on the earth whose people you went out to rescue, as you rescued them from Egypt. Then you made them belong to you yourself. And for doing all these things, you are now well known throughout the world. As your people advanced through this land, you drove out other people groups who were in Canaan, along with their gods. ²⁴You caused us Israelites to be your people forever, and you, Yahweh, have become our God!

²⁵And now, Yahweh my God, I pray that you will cause the things that you promised to me about my descendants to come true and be true forever, and that you will do the things that you said that you would do. ²⁶When that happens, you will become famous forever, and people will exclaim, 'Yahweh, the commander of angel armies, is the God who rules Israel.' And you will cause that there will forever be descendants of mine who will rule.

²⁷Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, you have revealed to me that you will make some of my descendants kings. For that reason, I have been brave enough to pray like this to you. ²⁸So now, O Yahweh, because you are God, we can trust that you will do what you promise. You have promised these good things to me. ²⁹So now I ask you that if it pleases you, you will bless my descendants, in order that they may continue to rule forever. Yahweh God, you have promised these things, so I know that if you do these things, you will keep blessing my descendants forever."

Chapter 8

¹Some time later, David's army attacked the Philistine army and defeated them. They took control over the Philistine city of Gath and its surrounding villages.

²David's army also defeated the army of the Moab people group. David forced their soldiers to lie down on the ground close to each other. His men killed two out of every three of them. The others of the Moab people were forced to accept David as their ruler, and they were forced to give to him every year the payment that he demanded.

³David's army also defeated the army of Hadadezer son of Rehob, who ruled the region of Zobah in Aram. That happened when he went try to regain power over the area at the upper part of the Euphrates River. ⁴David's army

captured 1,700 of Hadadezer's soldiers who used chariots, and twenty thousand soldiers on foot. They also crippled all but one hundred of the horses, and they would be used to pull chariots.

⁵When the army of Aram came from the city of Damascus to help King Hadadezer's army, David's soldiers killed twenty-two thousand of them. ⁶Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in their area, and the people of Aram were forced to accept David to be their ruler, and to give to David's government every year the payment of tribute money that he demanded. And Yahweh enabled David's army to win victories wherever they went.

⁷King David's soldiers took the gold shields that were carried by Hadadezer's officials, and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸They also brought to Jerusalem much bronze that they found in Tebah and Berothai, two cities that King Hadadezer had previously ruled.

⁹When Tou, the king of the city of Hamath in Aram, heard that David's army had defeated the entire army of King Hadadezer, ¹⁰he sent his son Joram to greet King David and to congratulate him about his army defeating Hadadezer's army, which Tou's army had fought many times. Joram brought to David many gifts made from gold, silver, and bronze.

¹¹King David dedicated all those items to Yahweh. He also dedicated the silver and gold that his army had taken from the nations that they had conquered. ¹²They had taken items from the people groups of Edom and Moab, from Ammon, from the Philistine, from the those who descended from Amalek, and from the people whom Hadadezer previously ruled.

¹³When David returned after defeating the armies of Aram, he became more famous because his army killed eighteen thousand soldiers from the Edom people group in the Valley of Salt near the Dead Sea.

¹⁴David stationed groups of his soldiers throughout the region of Edom, and forced the people there to accept him to be their king. Yahweh enabled David's army to win battles wherever they went.

¹⁵David ruled over all the Israelite people, and he always did for them what was fair and just. ¹⁶Joab was the army commander. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud, was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided that they should do. ¹⁷Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the official secretary; ¹⁸Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's bodyguards, and David's sons were his advisors.

Chapter 9

¹One day David asked some of his servants, "Is there anyone who is a descendant of Saul to whom I can act kindly?" He asked this because he had loved Jonathan.

²They told him that there was in Jerusalem a man named Ziba who had been a servant of Saul's family. So David sent messengers to summon Ziba. When he arrived, the king asked him, "Are you Ziba?" He replied, "Yes, your Majesty, I am."

³The king asked him, "Is there anyone in Saul's family to whom I can act kindly, as I promised God that I would do?" Ziba replied, "Yes, there is one son of Jonathan who is still alive. His feet are crippled."

⁴The king asked him, "Where is he?" Ziba replied, "He is living in the house of Machir son of Ammiel, in the city of Lo Debar east of the Jordan River."

⁵So King David sent messengers to bring Mephibosheth to Jerusalem.

⁶When Mephibosheth came to David, he knelt down with his face on the ground, to show respect. Then David said, "Mephibosheth!" He replied, "Yes, your Majesty, how may I serve you?"

⁷David said to him, "Do not be afraid. I will be kind to you because Jonathan your father was my friend. I will give back to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. And I want you to always eat with me in my house."

⁸Mephibosheth bowed in front of David again and said, "Sir, I am as worthless as a dead dog. I do not deserve that you act kindly toward me!"

⁹Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, "Saul was your master, and now I am giving to Mephibosheth everything that belonged to Saul and his family. ¹⁰You and your fifteen sons and your twenty servants must plow the land for Mephibosheth's family and plant crops and harvest them, in order that they will have food to eat. But Mephibosheth will eat with me at my house."

¹¹Ziba replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I will do everything that you have commanded me to do." So after that, Mephibosheth always ate at the king's table, as though he were one of the king's sons.

¹²Mephibosheth had a young son named Mika. All of Ziba's family became servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³So Mephibosheth, who was still crippled in both of his feet, started to live in Jerusalem, and he always ate at the king's table.

Chapter 10

¹Some time later, Nahash, the king of the Ammon people group, died; then his son Hanun became their king.

²David thought to himself, "Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son." So David sent some officials there, to tell Hanun that David was sorry that Hanun's father had died.

When those messengers arrived in the land of Ammon, ³the Ammonite leaders said to Hanun, "Do you think that it is to honor your father that David has sent these men to say that he is sorry that your father died? We think that he has sent them here to look around the city to determine how his army can conquer us!" ⁴Hanun believed what they said. So he commanded some soldiers to seize David's officials and insult them by shaving off one side of their beards, and by cutting off the lower part of their robes, with the result that their buttocks could be seen, and then they sent them away.

⁵The men were very humiliated, so they did not want to return home. When David found out about what had happened to his officials, he sent someone to tell them, "Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown again, and then return home."

⁶Then the Ammonite leaders realized that they had greatly insulted David. So they sent some men to hire some soldiers from other nearby areas to help defend them. They hired twenty thousand soldiers from the regions of Beth Rehob and Zobah northeast of Israel, and twelve thousand soldiers from the region of Tob, and one thousand soldiers from the army of the king of the region of Maacah.

⁷When David heard about that, he sent Joab with all of the Israelite army to fight against them. ⁸The Ammonite soldiers came outside their city gate and stood in a line ready for battle. At the same time, the foreign soldiers whom their king had hired grouped themselves in the open fields nearby.

⁹Joab saw that there were enemy soldiers in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he chose some of the best Israelite soldiers, and put them in positions to fight against the soldiers in the fields. ¹⁰He told his brother Abishai to command the other soldiers, those who were facing the Ammonite soldiers in front of their city gate.

¹¹Then Joab said, "If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for us to defeat them, your men must come and help us. But if the Ammonite soldiers are too strong for you, we will come and help your men. ¹²We must be strong and fight hard to defend our people and the cities that belong to our God. I will pray that Yahweh do what he considers to be good."

¹³So Joab and his army advanced to attack the army of Aram, and the Aramites ran away from them. ¹⁴When the Ammonites saw that the Aramites were running away, they also started to run away from Abishai and his men; they retreated back inside the city. Then Joab and his army left that place and went back to Jerusalem.

¹⁵After the leaders of the army of Aram saw that the Israelite army had defeated them, they gathered all their troops together. ¹⁶Their king, Hadadezer, summoned the soldiers of Aram who lived on the east side of the Euphrates River. They gathered at the city of Helam. Their commander was Shobak.

¹⁷When David heard about that, he gathered all the Israelite soldiers, and they crossed the Jordan River and marched to Helam. There the army of Aram took their positions, and the battle started. ¹⁸But the Aramites ran away from the Israelite soldiers. David and his army killed seven hundred of their chariot soldiers and forty thousand other soldiers. They also wounded Shobak, their commander, and he died there. ¹⁹When all the kings whom Hadadezer ruled realized that Israel had defeated them, they made peace with the Israelites and agreed to accept David as their king. So the Arameans were unwilling to help the Ammonites any longer, because they were afraid of Israel.

Chapter 11

¹In that region, kings usually went with their armies to fight their enemies in the springtime. But the following year, in the springtime, David did not do that. Instead, he stayed in Jerusalem, and he sent his commander Joab to lead the army. So Joab went with the other officers and the rest of the Israelite army. They crossed the Jordan River and defeated the army of the Ammon people group. Then they surrounded their capital city, Rabbah.

²Late one afternoon, after David woke up from a short sleep, he walked around the flat roof of his palace. He saw a woman who was bathing in the courtyard of her house. The woman was very beautiful. ³David sent a messenger to find out who she was. The messenger returned and said, "She is Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam, and her husband is Uriah, from the Heth people group."

⁴Then David sent more messengers to get her. They brought her to David, and he slept with her. (She had just finished performing the rituals to make herself pure after her menstrual period.) Then Bathsheba went back home.

⁵After some time, she realized that she was pregnant. So she sent a messenger to tell David this news.

⁶Then David sent a message to Joab. He said, "Send Uriah, from the Heth people group, to me." So Joab did that. He sent Uriah to David. ⁷When he arrived, David asked if Joab was well, if other soldiers were well, and how the war was progressing. ⁸Then David, hoping that Uriah would go home and sleep with his wife, said to Uriah, "Now go home and relax for a while." So Uriah left, and David gave someone a gift to take to Uriah's house. ⁹But Uriah did not go home. Instead, he slept at the palace entrance with the palace guards.

¹⁰When someone told David that Uriah did not go to his house that night, David summoned him again and said to him, "Why did you not go home to be with your wife last night, after having been away for a long time?"

¹¹Uriah replied, "The soldiers of Judah and Israel are camping in the open fields, and even our commander Joab is sleeping in a tent, and the sacred chest is with them. I could not possibly go home, eat and drink, and sleep with my wife. I solemnly declare that I will never do such a thing!"

¹²Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today. I will let you return to the battle tomorrow." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and that night. ¹³The next day, David invited him to a meal. So Uriah had a meal with David, and David made him drink a lot of wine so that he would get drunk, hoping that if he was drunk, he would sleep with his wife. But that night, Uriah again did not go home. Instead, he slept on a cot with the king's servants.

¹⁴Someone reported that to David, so the next morning he wrote a letter to Joab, and gave it to Uriah to take to Joab. ¹⁵In the letter, he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line, where the fighting is the worst. Then command the soldiers to pull back from him, in order that our enemies will kill him."

¹⁶So after Joab got the letter, as his army was surrounding the city, he sent Uriah to a place where he knew that their enemies' strongest and best soldiers would be fighting. ¹⁷The men from the city came out and fought with Joab's soldiers. They killed some of David's officers, including Uriah.

¹⁸Then Joab sent a messenger to David to tell him about the fighting. ¹⁹He said to the messenger, "Tell David the news about the battle. After you finish telling that to him, ²⁰if David is angry because so many officers were killed, he may ask you, 'Why did your soldiers go so close to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot arrows at you from the top of the city wall?' ²¹Do you not remember how Abimelech son of Gideon was killed? A woman who lived in Thebez threw a huge millstone on him from the top of a tower, and he died. So why did our troops go near to the city wall?' If the king asks this, then tell him, 'Your officer Uriah also was killed.'"

²²So the messenger went and told David everything that Joab told him to say. ²³The messenger said to David, "Our enemies were very brave, and came out of the city to fight us in the fields. They were driving us back at first, but then we forced them back to the city gate. ²⁴Then their archers shot arrows at us from the top of the city wall. They killed some of your officers. They killed your officer Uriah, too."

²⁵David said to the messenger, "Go back to Joab and say to him, 'Do not worry about what happened, because no one ever knows who will die in battle.' Tell him that the next time, his troops should attack the city more strongly and capture it. Encourage Joab in this way."

²⁶When Uriah's wife Bathsheba heard that her husband had died, she mourned for him. ²⁷When her time of mourning was over, David sent messengers to bring her to the palace. In this way she became David's wife. She later gave birth to a son. But Yahweh was very displeased with what David had done.

Chapter 12

¹Yahweh told the prophet Nathan what David had done, and he sent Nathan to tell this story to David, "Once there were two men in a certain city. One man was rich and the other was poor. ²The rich man owned a lot of cattle and sheep. ³But the poor man had only one little female lamb, which he had bought. He raised the lamb, and it grew up with his own children. He would give the lamb some of his own food and let it drink from his cup. He let the lamb sleep as he held it next to himself. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

⁴One day a visitor came to see the rich man. The rich man did not want to take one of his own animals and kill it to prepare a meal for his guest. So instead, he sent men to take the poor man's lamb; then he had someone kill it and prepare a meal with it for his guest."

⁵When David heard that, he was very angry. He said to Nathan, "I solemnly declare that the man who did that should be executed! ⁶He should at least pay back to the poor man four lambs for doing this, and for not having pity on the poor man."

⁷Nathan said to David, "You are the man I have been talking about! And this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you: 'I rescued you from Saul, and I made you king of Israel. ⁸I gave you his palace; I let you hold his wives next to you. I made you king over Israel and Judah. If you had told me that you were not content with what I gave you, I would have given you much more! ⁹So why have you rejected what I have commanded, when I said that my people must not commit adultery? You have done what I consider to be very evil! You have arranged for Uriah to die in battle with the Ammonites, and you have taken his wife to be your wife! ¹⁰You have rejected me, because you took Uriah's wife to be your wife. So some of your descendants will always die in battle. ¹¹I solemnly declare to you that I will cause someone from your own family to bring disaster to you. I will take your wives and give them to that person, and he will sleep with them in the daytime, where everyone can see it, and you will know all about it. ¹²What you did, you did secretly, but what I cause to happen, everyone in Israel will be able to see it or know about it.'"

¹³David replied, "I have sinned against Yahweh." Nathan said to David, "Yahweh has overlooked your sin. You will not die because of this sin. ¹⁴But you have shown contempt for Yahweh by doing this. So your baby will die."

¹⁵Then Nathan went home.

Then Yahweh caused the baby, the one that Uriah's wife had given birth to, to become very sick. ¹⁶So David prayed to God that the child would not die. He fasted, and he went into his room and lay all night on the floor. ¹⁷The next morning his most important servants stood around him and tried to urge him to get up. But he would not get up, and he would not eat with them.

¹⁸One week later the baby died. David's servants were afraid to tell that to David. They said to each other, "While the baby was still alive, we talked to him, but he would not answer us. Now, if we tell him that the baby is dead, he may do something to harm himself!"

¹⁹But when David saw that his servants were whispering something to each other, he realized that the baby must be dead. So he asked them, "Is the baby dead?" They replied, "Yes, he is dead."

²⁰Then David got up from the floor. He bathed himself, put lotions on his body, and put on other clothes. Then he went into Yahweh's sacred tent and worshiped him. Then he went home. He requested his servants bring some food. They gave him some, and he ate it.

²¹Then his servants said to him, "We do not understand why you have done this! While the baby was still alive, you cried for him and refused to eat anything. But now that the baby has died, you are not crying anymore. You got up and ate some food!"

²²He replied, "While the baby was still alive I fasted and cried. I thought, 'Perhaps Yahweh will act mercifully toward me and not allow the baby to die.' ²³But now the baby is dead. So there is no reason for me to fast anymore. I cannot bring him back to myself. Some day I will go to where he is, but he will not return to me."

²⁴Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba. Then he slept with her, and she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. David named that boy Solomon. Yahweh loved this little boy. ²⁵He told the prophet Nathan to tell David to name the baby boy Jedidiah, because Yahweh loved him.

²⁶Meanwhile, Joab's soldiers attacked Rabbah, the capital city of the Ammon people group. They captured the king's fortress, which protected the water supply. ²⁷Then Joab sent messengers to David to tell him this, "My troops are attacking Rabbah, and we have captured the city's water supply. ²⁸Now gather your troops and come and surround the city and capture it. If you do not do that, my troops will capture the city and it will then be named for me instead: The City of Joab."

²⁹So David gathered all his troops. They went to Rabbah, attacked it, and captured it. ³⁰Then David took the crown from the head of their king and put it on his own head. It was very heavy; it weighed about thirty-three kilograms, and it had a very valuable stone in it. His soldiers also took many other valuable things from the city. ³¹Then they brought the people out of the city and forced them to work for them, using saws, iron picks, and axes. David's troops also forced them to make bricks. David's soldiers did this in all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 13

¹David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar. Another of David's sons, Amnon, was attracted to Tamar, with whom he was a half-brother. ²He wanted to sleep with Tamar very much, so much that he felt sick with desire. But it seemed impossible for Amnon to get her, because she was a virgin, so they kept men away from her.

³But Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, who was a nephew to David, son of David's brother Shimeah. Jehonadab was a very crafty man.

⁴One day Jehonadab said to Amnon, "You are the king's son, but every day I see that you seem very depressed. What is your problem?" Amnon replied, "I am in love with Tamar, my half-brother Absalom's sister."

⁵Jehonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend that you are sick. When your father comes to see you, ask him to let your half-sister Tamar come and give you some food to eat. Ask for her to cook the food while you are watching her. Then she can serve it to you herself."

⁶So Amnon lay down and pretended that he was sick. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I am sick. Please allow Tamar to come and make a couple breadcakes for me while I am watching, and then she can serve them to me."

⁷So David sent a message to Tamar in the palace saying, "Amnon is sick; he wants you to go to his house and prepare some food for him." ⁸So Tamar went to Amnon's house, where he was lying in bed. She took some dough and kneaded it, and formed them into some breadcakes while he was watching her. Then she baked them. ⁹She took them out of the pan and put them on a plate in front of him, but he refused to eat them. Then he said to his servants in the room, "All the rest of you, leave me!" So they all left.

¹⁰Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food to my bed and serve it to me." So Tamar took into his room the breadcakes that she had made. ¹¹But when she brought them close for him to eat them, he grabbed her and said to her, "Come to bed with me!"

¹²She replied, "No, do not force me to do such a disgraceful thing! We never do things like that in Israel! That would be shameful! ¹³I would not be able to endure being disgraced by having done that. And as for you, everyone in Israel would condemn you for having done such a disgraceful deed. So I plead with you, talk to the king. I am sure that he will allow me to marry you." ¹⁴But he paid no attention to her. He was stronger than she was, so he forced her to sleep with him.

¹⁵Then Amnon hated her very much. He hated her much more than he had desired her. He said to her, "Get up and get out of here!"

¹⁶But she said to him, "No! It would be very wrong for you to send me away. It would be worse than what you just did to me!" But again he paid no attention to her.

¹⁷He summoned his personal servant and said to him, "Take this woman outside, away from me, and lock the door so that she cannot come in again!" ¹⁸So the servant put her outside and locked the door.

Now Tamar was wearing a decorated long robe, which was the clothing that was usually worn by the unmarried daughters of the king at that time. ¹⁹But Tamar tore the long robe that she was wearing, and put ashes on her head to show that she was very sad. Then she put her hands on her head to show that she was grieving, and she went away crying.

²⁰Her brother Absalom saw her and said to her, "Has your half-brother Amnon forced you to sleep with him? Please, my sister, do not tell anyone, and do not become depressed." So Tamar went to live in Absalom's house, and she was very sad and lonely.

²¹When King David heard about all this, he became very angry. ²²And Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister to sleep with him, so he would not speak to Amnon about anything.

²³However, two years later, Absalom hired men to shear his sheep at Baal Hazor, which is near the tribal land of Ephraim. They were going to celebrate when they finished shearing the sheep, so Absalom invited all the king's sons to come and celebrate with him. ²⁴Absalom went to the king and said to him, "Sir, my workers have been shearing my sheep. Please come with your officials to celebrate with us!"

²⁵But the king replied, "No, my son, it would not be good for all of us to go, because we are so many people; we would cost you too much." Absalom continued urging him, but the king would not go. Instead, he said that he hoped that God would bless them while they celebrated.

²⁶Then Absalom said, "If you will not go, please allow my half-brother Amnon to go with us." But the king replied, "Why do you want him to go with you?"

²⁷But Absalom continued to insist, so finally the king permitted Amnon and all David's other sons to go with Absalom.

²⁸So they all went. At the celebration, Absalom commanded his servants, "Notice when Amnon has become a bit drunk from the wine. Then when I signal to you, kill him. Do not be afraid. You will be doing this only because I told you to do it. So be courageous and do it!" ²⁹So Absalom's servants did what Absalom told them to do. They killed Amnon. All the rest of David's sons saw what happened and fled, riding on their mules.

³⁰While they were on their way home, someone quickly went and reported to David, "Absalom has killed all of your other sons. None of them is alive!" ³¹The king stood up, tore his clothes because he was extremely sad, and then he threw himself down on the ground. All the servants who were there also tore their clothes.

³²But Jehonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, "Your Majesty, I am sure that they have not killed all your sons. I am sure that only Amnon is dead, because Absalom has been determined to do this ever since the day that Amnon raped Tamar. ³³So, your Majesty, do not believe the report that all your sons are dead. I am sure that only Amnon is dead."

³⁴In the meantime, Absalom ran away.

Just then, a soldier keeping guard on the city wall saw a large crowd of people coming down the hill along the road to the west. He ran and told the king what he had seen. ³⁵Jonadab said to the king, "Look there! What I told you is true. Your other sons are alive and have come!"

³⁶And as soon as he said that, David's sons came in. They all started crying, and David and all his officials also cried very much.

³⁷⁻³⁸But Absalom had fled. He went to stay with the king of the region of Geshur. His name was Talmai son of Ammihud. Absalom stayed there for three years.

But King David mourned for his son Amnon for a long time, ³⁹but after that, he desired very much to see Absalom, because he was no longer grieving about Amnon being dead.

Chapter 14

¹Joab realized that the king was longing to see Absalom. ²So Joab sent someone to the city of Tekoa to bring to him a woman who was very clever. When she arrived, Joab said to her, "Pretend that you are grieving because someone has died. Put on clothes that show that you are mourning. Do not put any lotion on your body. Act as if you were a woman who has been mourning for a long time. ³And go to the king, and tell him what I tell you to say." Then Joab told her what to say to the king.

⁴So the woman from Tekoa went to the king. She prostrated herself in front of him to show honor and then said, "Your Majesty, help me!"

⁵The king replied, "What is your problem?" She replied, "Please, sir, I am a widow. My husband died some time ago.

⁶I had two sons. But one day they quarreled with each other out in the fields. There was no one to separate them, and one of them struck the other one and killed him. ⁷Now, all my family oppose me. They are insisting that I allow them to kill my son who is still alive, in order that they may get revenge for his killing his brother. But if they do

that, I will not have any son to inherit my possessions. I will be without any son at all, and my husband will have no son to preserve our family's name."

⁸Then the king said to the woman, "Go back home. I will take care of this matter for you."

⁹The woman from Tekoa replied to the king, "Your Majesty, if any criticizes you for helping me, my family and I will accept the blame. You and the royal family will be innocent."

¹⁰The king said to her, "If anyone says anything to threaten you, bring that person to me, and I will make sure that he will never cause you trouble again."

¹¹Then the woman said, "Your Majesty, please pray that Yahweh your God will not allow my relative, who wants to get revenge on my son for killing his brother, to be able to do that."

David replied, "As surely as Yahweh lives, your son will not be harmed at all." ¹²Then the woman said, "Your Majesty, please allow me to say one more thing to you." He replied, "Speak!"

¹³The woman said, "Why have you done this bad thing to God's people? You have not allowed your son Absalom to return home. By saying what you have just said, you have certainly declared that what you have done is wrong.

¹⁴All of us will die. We are like water that cannot be picked up after it is spilled on the ground. God does not take life away, but instead, God creates ways for those who have been exiled to return and be restored to their people and to their homes.

¹⁵Now, Your Majesty, I have come to you because others have threatened me. So I said to myself, 'I will go and talk to the king, and perhaps he will do what I request him to do. ¹⁶Perhaps he will listen to me, and save me from the man who is trying to kill my son. If my son is killed, it would result in us disappearing from the land that God gave to us.'

¹⁷And I thought, 'What the king says will comfort me, because the king is like an angel of God. He knows what is good and what is evil.' I pray that Yahweh our God will be with you."

¹⁸Then the king said to the woman, "I will now ask you a question. Answer it; tell me the truth." The woman replied, "Your Majesty, ask your question."

¹⁹The king said, "Was Joab the one who told you to do this?" She replied, "Yes, Your Majesty, as surely as you live, I cannot say anything to avoid telling you what is true. Yes, indeed, it was Joab who told me to come here, and who told me what to say. ²⁰He did it in order to cause you to think differently about this matter. Your Majesty, you are as wise as God's angels, and it seems that you know everything that happens on the earth, so you know why Joab sent me here."

²¹Then the king summoned Joab and said to him, "Listen! I have decided to do what you want. So go and get that young man Absalom and bring him back to Jerusalem."

²²Joab prostrated himself on the ground, and then he bowed down before the king, and asked God to bless him. Then Joab said, "Your Majesty, today I know that you are pleased with me, because you have agreed to do what I requested."

²³Then Joab got up and went to Geshur, and got Absalom and brought him back to Jerusalem. ²⁴But the king said that he would not allow Absalom to come to him. He said, "I do not want him to come to see me." So Absalom lived in his own house, and did not go to talk to the king.

²⁵Now Absalom was very handsome. There were no imperfections on his body, from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. In all of Israel there was no one whom people admired more than Absalom. ²⁶His hair was very thick, and he cut it only once each year, when it became very heavy on him. Using the standard weights, he would weigh the hair that he cut off, and it always weighed about two and one-half kilograms. ²⁷Absalom had three sons and one daughter named Tamar. She was a very beautiful woman.

²⁸After Absalom returned to Jerusalem, he lived there two years, and during that time he never was allowed to see the king. ²⁹So he sent a messenger to go to Joab to request him to come and talk to him, but Joab refused to come. So Absalom sent a messenger to him a second time, but he still would not come.

³⁰Then Absalom said to his servants, "You know that Joab's field is next to mine, and that he has barley growing there. Go and light a fire there to burn the barley." So Absalom's servants went there and lit a fire, and all the barley burned.

³¹Joab knew who had done it, so he went to Absalom's house and said to him, "Why have your servants burned the barley in my field?" ³²Absalom replied, "Because you did not come to me when I sent messengers to you requesting that you come. I wanted to request that you go to the king to say to him, 'Absalom wants to know what good it did for him to leave Geshur and come here. He thinks that it would have been better for him to stay there. He wants you to allow him to talk to you. And if you think that he has done something that is wrong, you can command that he be executed.'" ³³So Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came to the king and knelt down in front of him with his face touching the ground. Then the king kissed Absalom to show that he was pleased to see him.

Chapter 15

¹Some time later, Absalom acquired a chariot and horses to pull it. He hired fifty men to run in front of him to honor him while he was riding around Jerusalem in the chariot. ²Furthermore, he always rose early each morning and stood by the city gate. Whenever someone came there with a dispute with someone that he wanted the king to decide, Absalom would call out to him, asking, "What city are you from?" The person would tell him what city and tribe he was from. ³Then Absalom would say to him, "Listen, I am sure that what you are saying is right. But there is no one whom the king has appointed to listen to people like you." ⁴Absalom would then add, "I wish that I were a judge in this land. If I were a judge, anyone who had a dispute could come to me, and I would decide it fairly."

⁵And whenever anyone came near to Absalom to bow respectfully in front of him, Absalom would reach out and embrace him and kiss him. ⁶Absalom did this to everyone in Israel who came to the king with a dispute to be decided. In that way, Absalom persuaded all the Israelite people to be more pleased with him than they were pleased with his father David.

⁷Four years later, Absalom went to the king and said, "Please allow me to go to the city of Hebron, in order that I can do what I promised Yahweh that I would do. ⁸When I was living in Geshur, in Aram, I promised Yahweh that if he brought me back to Jerusalem, I would worship him in Hebron."

⁹The king replied, "I will permit you to go safely." So Absalom went to Hebron.

¹⁰But while he was there, he secretly sent messengers to all the tribes in Israel to tell them, "When you hear the sound of the trumpets being blown, shout, 'Absalom has become the king at Hebron!'" ¹¹Absalom had taken with him to Hebron two hundred men from Jerusalem, but they did not know what Absalom was planning to do. ¹²While Absalom was offering sacrifices at Hebron, he sent a message to Ahithophel from the town of Giloh, requesting him to come. Ahithophel was one of the king's advisors. So the number of people who joined Absalom and who were ready to rebel against David became larger.

¹³Soon a messenger came to David and said to him, "All the Israelite people are joining Absalom to rebel against you!"

¹⁴So David said to all his officials, "We must leave immediately if we want to escape from Absalom! We must go quickly, before he and his men arrive. If we do not do that, they will kill us and everyone else in the city!"

¹⁵The king's officials said, "Very well, your Majesty, we are ready to do whatever you wish."

¹⁶So the king left ten of his slave wives there to take care of the palace, but all the other people in his palace went with him. ¹⁷When they all were leaving the city, they stopped at the last house. ¹⁸The king and his officials stood there while his bodyguards went by in front of him. Six hundred soldiers from the city of Gath also walked by in front of him.

¹⁹Then David said to Ittai, the leader of the soldiers from Gath, "Why are you going with us? Go back and stay with Absalom the new king. You are not an Israelite; you are living away from your own land. ²⁰You have lived here in Israel for only a short time. And we do not even know where we will be going. So it is not right for me to force you to wander around with us. And take your troops with you. And I hope that Yahweh will faithfully love and be loyal to you."

²¹But Ittai replied, "Your Majesty, as surely as you live, wherever you go, I will go. I will stay with you whether they kill me or allow me to live."

²²David replied to Ittai, "Very well, march with us!" So Ittai and all his troops and their families went with David.

²³All the people along the road cried when they saw them walking by. The king and all the others crossed the Kidron Valley and went up the hill toward the wilderness.

²⁴Abiathar and Zadok, the priests, were also walking with them. The descendants of Levi who helped the priests also went with them, carrying the sacred chest that contained the Ten Commandments. But they set it on the ground until all the others had left the city.

²⁵But then the king said to Zadok, "You two must take the sacred chest back into the city. If Yahweh is pleased with me, he will some day allow me to return to see it and the place where it is kept. ²⁶But if he says that he is not pleased with me, then I am willing for him to do to me whatever he thinks is good."

²⁷He also said to Zadok, "Listen to what I suggest! Return to the city peacefully, and take your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan with you. ²⁸I will wait in the wilderness at the place where people can walk across the river, until you send a message to me." ²⁹So Zadok and Abiathar carried the sacred chest back to Jerusalem, and they stayed there.

³⁰David and those with him went up the Mount of Olives. David was crying while he walked. He was walking barefoot and had something covering his head to show that he was sorrowful. All those who were going with him also covered their heads and were crying while they walked. ³¹Someone told David that Ahithophel had joined with those who were rebelling against David. So David prayed, "Yahweh, cause whatever Ahithophel suggests to Absalom that he should do be considered to be foolish!"

³²When they arrived at the top of the hill, where there was a place where the people had previously been accustomed to worship God, suddenly Hushai, from the Arki people group, met David. He had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head to show that he was very sad. ³³David said to him, "If you go with me, you will not be able to help me. ³⁴But if you return to the city, you can help me by saying to Absalom, 'Your Majesty, I will serve you as faithfully as I served your father.' If you do that and stay near Absalom, you will be able to oppose any advice that Ahithophel gives to Absalom. ³⁵Zadok and Abiathar the priests are already there. Whatever you hear people say in the king's palace, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar. ³⁶Keep in mind that Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan are also there. You can tell them whatever you find out, and send them to report it to me."

³⁷So David's friend Hushai returned to the city, at the same time that Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

Chapter 16

¹When David and the others had gone a little way past the top of the hill, Mephibosheth's servant Ziba met him. He had with him two donkeys that were carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred bunches of fresh figs, and a leather bag full of wine.

²The king said to Ziba, "What are these for?" Ziba replied, "The donkeys are for your family to ride on, the bread and the fruit are for your soldiers to eat, and the wine is for them to drink when they become exhausted in the wilderness."

³The king said, "Where is Mephibosheth, the grandson of your former master Saul?" Ziba answered, "He stayed in Jerusalem, because he thinks that now the people will allow him to rule the kingdom that his grandfather Saul ruled."

⁴The king said to Ziba, "Very well, everything that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours." Ziba replied, "Your Majesty, I will humbly serve you, and I desire that you will always be pleased with me."

⁵When King David and those with him arrived at the city of Bahurim, a man named Shimei met him. Shimei, whose father was Gera, was a member of the same clan that Saul's family belong to. Shimei was cursing David as he approached. ⁶Then he threw stones at David and his officials, even though the officials and David's bodyguards surrounded David. ⁷Shimei cursed David and said to him, "Get out of here, you murderer, you scoundrel! ⁸Yahweh is getting revenge on you all for murdering many people in Saul's family. And now he is giving Saul's kingdom to your son Absalom. You murderer, you are being paid back for the many people that you have killed!"

⁹Then Abishai said to the king, "Your Majesty, this man is as worthless as a dead dog! Why should he be allowed to curse you? Allow me to go over there and cut off his head!"

¹⁰But the king replied, "You two sons of Zeruiah, I want nothing to do with you. If he is cursing me because Yahweh told him to do so, then no one should ask him, 'Why are you cursing the king?'"

¹¹Then David said to Abishai and to all his officials, "You know that my own son is trying to kill me. So it is not surprising that this man from the tribe of Benjamin is also trying to kill me. Just ignore him, and allow him to curse me. Yahweh has told him to do that. ¹²Perhaps Yahweh will see that I am having all this trouble, and some day he will repay me by blessing me in return for this man cursing me today." ¹³Then David and those who were with him walked along the road, and Shimei continued walking along the hillside near him. While he walked along, he cursed David and threw stones and dirt at him. ¹⁴When David and those stopped traveling that evening, they were very tired. So they rested.

¹⁵While that was happening, Absalom and all the Israelites who were with him had arrived in Jerusalem. Ahithophel had also arrived there. ¹⁶When David's friend Hushai came to Absalom, he said to Absalom, "I desire that the king will live a long time! May you live for many years!"

¹⁷Absalom said to Hushai, "You have been loyal to your friend David for a long time. So why did you not go with him instead of coming to me?"

¹⁸Hushai replied, "It is right for me to serve the one whom Yahweh and these people and all the other people of Israel have chosen to be their king. So I will stay with you. ¹⁹Besides, whom should I serve? Why should I not serve my master's son? Just as I have served your father, even so, I will serve you."

²⁰Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "What do you advise that we should do?"

²¹Ahithophel replied, "Your father left some of his slave wives in the palace to take care of it. You should sleep with them. When everyone in Israel hears that you have done that, they will realize that you hold your father in contempt. Then all those who are with you will be very encouraged." ²²So they set up a tent for Absalom on the

roof of the palace. And Absalom went into the tent and slept with his father's slave wives, one by one, and everyone could see them going into the tent.

²³In those days, people accepted what Ahithophel recommended as though he was speaking the words of God. So just as David had always accepted what Ahithophel said, now Absalom did also.

Chapter 17

¹Then Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Allow me to choose twelve thousand men, and I will take them tonight to go after David. ²We will attack him while he is tired and discouraged, and make him very afraid. Everyone with him will run away. We only need to kill the king. ³Then we will bring back all his soldiers to you, and they will come happily. You need to kill only one man—David, and then all trouble will be over." ⁴Absalom and all the Israelite leaders who were with him thought that what Ahithophel said would be good to do.

⁵But Absalom said, "Summon Hushai also, and we will hear what he suggests." ⁶So when Hushai arrived, Absalom told him what Ahithophel had suggested. Then he asked Hushai, "What do you think we should do? If you do not think that we should do what Ahithophel advises, tell us what you think that we should do."

⁷Hushai replied, "This time what Ahithophel has suggested is not good advice. ⁸You know that your father and the men who are with him are strong soldiers, and that now they are very angry, like a mother bear whose cubs have been stolen from her. Furthermore, your father knows how to wage war because he has fought in many battles. He will not stay with his troops during the night. ⁹Right now he is probably already hiding in one of the pits, or in some other place. If his soldiers start to attack your soldiers, and if they kill some of them, whoever hears about that will say, 'Many of the soldiers with Absalom have been killed!' ¹⁰Then your other soldiers, even if they are as fearless as lions, they will become very afraid. Do not forget that everyone in Israel knows that your father is a great soldier, and that the soldiers who are with him are also very brave.

¹¹So what I suggest is that you call all the Israelite soldiers, from Dan in the far north to Beersheba in the far south. They will be as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. Wait until they come, and then you yourself should lead us into the battle. ¹²We will find your father, wherever he is, and we will attack him from all sides, as dew covers all the ground. And neither he nor any of the soldiers who are with him will survive. ¹³If he escapes into some city, all our soldiers will bring ropes and pull that city down into the valley. As a result, not one stone will be left there on top of the hill where that city was!"

¹⁴Absalom and all the other Israelite men who were with him said, "What Hushai suggests is better than what Ahithophel suggested." The reason that happened was that Yahweh had determined that if they would accept the good advice that Ahithophel had given them, they would have been able to defeat David. But as a result of their doing what Hushai suggested, Yahweh would cause a disaster to happen to Absalom.

¹⁵Then Hushai told the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, what both he and Ahithophel had suggested to Absalom and the Israelite leaders. ¹⁶Then he said to them, "Send a message quickly to David. Tell him to not stay at the place where people walk across the river, near the wilderness. Instead, he and his soldiers must cross the Jordan River immediately, in order that they will not be killed."

¹⁷The priest's two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were waiting at the spring at En Rogel, outside Jerusalem. They did not dare to enter the city, because if someone saw them, he would report it to Absalom. While they were at En Rogel, a female servant of the two priests would frequently go to them and report to them what was happening, and then they would go and report it to King David. ¹⁸But a young man saw them, and went and reported it to Absalom. They found out what the young man had done, so both of them left quickly and went to stay in the house of a man in the city of Bahurim. That man had a well in his courtyard, so the two men went down into the well to hide. ¹⁹The man's wife took a cloth and covered the mouth of the well, and then scattered grain on top of it order than no one would even suspect that a well was there.

²⁰Some of Absalom's soldiers found out where the two men had gone. So they went to the house, and asked the woman, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

She replied, "They went across the Jordan River."

So the soldiers crossed the river and searched for them. But after they could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. ²¹After they had gone, the two men came out of the well and went and reported to King David what had happened and what Ahithophel had suggested. Then they said to him, "Cross the Jordan River quickly!" ²²So David and all his soldiers quickly started to cross the river, and by dawn they had all crossed to the other side.

²³When Ahithophel realized that Absalom was not going to do what he suggested, he put a saddle on his donkey and returned to his own city. He gave to his family instructions about his possessions, and then he hanged himself because he knew that Absalom would be defeated and that he would be considered a traitor and be killed. His body was buried in the tomb where his ancestors had been buried.

²⁴David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim. At the same time, Absalom and all his soldiers also crossed the Jordan River. ²⁵Now Absalom had appointed his cousin Amasa to be the commander of his army, instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of Jether, an Ishmaelite. Amasa's mother was Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and the sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah. ²⁶Absalom and his Israelite soldiers set up their tents in the region of Gilead.

²⁷When David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from the Ammonite city of Rabbah, and Machir son of Ammiel from the city of Lo Debar, and Barzillai from the city of Rogelim in Gilead came to them.

²⁸They brought sleeping mats, bowls, clay pots, barley, wheat flour, parched grain, beans, and lentils. ²⁹They brought honey and curds, sheep, and some cream for David and his soldiers to eat. They knew that David and his soldiers would be hungry and tired and thirsty from marching in the wilderness.

Chapter 18

¹David arranged his soldiers for the battle. He divided them into groups, and he appointed a commander for each one hundred soldiers and a commander for each one thousand soldiers. ²He sent them out in three groups. Joab commanded one group, Joab's brother Abishai commanded a second group, and Ittai from Gath commanded the third group. David said to them, "I myself will go with you to battle."

³But his soldiers said, "No, we will not allow you to go with us. If they force us to all run away, they will not be concerned about us. Or if they kill half of us, they will not care about that, either. To them, capturing you is more important than capturing ten thousand of us. So it would be better that you stay here in the city and send help to us."

⁴The king replied to them, "Very well, I will do whatever seems best to you." So he stood at the city gate and watched while his soldiers marched out, group by group.

⁵While they were leaving, the king commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, "For my sake, do not harm my son Absalom!" And all the troops heard about this, that David had given this order to the three commanders.

⁶So the army went out to fight against the Israelite soldiers who were with Absalom. They fought the battle in the forest where people from the tribe of Ephraim lived. ⁷David's soldiers defeated Absalom's soldiers. They killed twenty thousand of them. ⁸The battle was fought all over that area, and the number of men who died because of dangerous things in the forest was greater than the number of men who were killed in the battle.

⁹During the battle, Absalom suddenly came near some of David's soldiers. Absalom was riding on his mule, and when the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak tree, Absalom's head was caught in the branches. The mule kept going, but Absalom was left dangling in the air.

¹⁰One of David's soldiers saw what happened, and went and told Joab, "I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!"

¹¹Joab said to the man, "What? You say that you saw him hanging there, so why did you not kill him immediately? If you had killed him, I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a soldier's belt!"

¹²The man replied to Joab, "Even if you gave me a thousand pieces of silver, I would not have done anything to harm the king's son. We all heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai: 'For my sake, do not harm my son Absalom!' ¹³If I had disobeyed the king and killed Absalom, the king would have heard about it, because the king hears about everything, and even you would not have defended me!"

¹⁴Joab said, "I am not going to waste time talking to you!" Then he took three spears, went to where Absalom was, and thrust them into Absalom's chest while he was still alive, dangling from the oak tree. ¹⁵Then ten young men who carried weapons for Joab surrounded Absalom and finished killing him.

¹⁶Then Joab blew his trumpet to signal that they should not fight anymore, and his soldiers returned from pursuing Absalom's men. ¹⁷They took Absalom's body and threw it into a huge pit in the forest, and covered it with a huge pile of stones. Then all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been with Absalom fled to their own homes.

¹⁸Absalom had no sons to preserve his family name because his sons had died while they were still young. So while Absalom was alive, he had built a monument to himself in the Valley of Kings near Jerusalem, in order that people would remember him. He put his name on the monument, and people still call it Absalom's Monument.

¹⁹After Absalom had been killed, Zadok's son Ahimaaz said to Joab, "Allow me to run to the king to tell him the good news that Yahweh has rescued him from the power of his enemies!"

²⁰But Joab said to him, "No, I will not allow you to take news to the king today. Some other day I will allow you to take some news, but not today. If you took news today it would not be good news for the king, because his son is dead."

²¹Then Joab said to David's servant who was from Ethiopia, "You go and tell the king what you have seen." So the man from Ethiopia bowed in respect to Joab, and started to run.

²²Then Ahimaaz said again to Joab, "Even though that man from Ethiopia is running, allow me to run behind him." Joab replied, "My boy, why do you want to do that? You will not receive any reward for your news!"

²³But Ahimaaz replied, "That does not matter, I want to go." So Joab said, "Very well, then, go." So Ahimaaz ran along another road through the Valley of the Jordan and arrived where David was, before the man from Ethiopia arrived.

²⁴David was sitting between the outer gate and the inner gate of the city. The watchman went up on top of the city wall and stood on the roof over the gates. He looked out and saw one man running alone. ²⁵The watchman called down and reported it to the king. The king said, "If he is alone, that indicates that he is bringing news." The man who was running continued to come closer.

²⁶Then the watchman saw another man running. So he called down to the gatekeeper, "Look! There is another man running!" And the king said, "He also is bringing some good news."

²⁷The watchman said, "I think the first man must be Ahimaaz, because he is running as Ahimaaz runs." The king said, "Ahimaaz is a good man, and I am sure he is coming with good news."

²⁸When Ahimaaz reached the king, he called out, "I hope that things will go well with you!" Then he prostrated himself on the ground in front of the king and said, "Your Majesty, praise Yahweh our God, who has rescued you from the men who were rebelling against you!"

²⁹The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz did not want to answer that question, so he replied, "When Joab sent me, I saw that there was a lot of confusion, but I do not know what it was about."

³⁰Then the king said, "Stand aside." So Ahimaaz stepped aside and stood there.

³¹Suddenly the man from Ethiopia arrived, and said, "Your Majesty, I have good news for you! Yahweh has enabled your soldiers to defeat all those who rebelled against you!"

³²The king said to him, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The man from Ethiopia replied, "Sir, I wish that what happened to him would happen to all of your enemies and to all those who rebel against you!"

³³The king realized that he meant that Absalom was dead, so he became extremely distressed, and he went up to the room above the gateway and cried. While he was going up, he kept crying out, "O, my son Absalom! My son! O, my son Absalom, I desire that I had died instead of you!"

Chapter 19

¹Someone told Joab that the king was crying and mourning because Absalom had died. ²All of David's soldiers heard that the king was mourning because Absalom was dead. So they became sad that they had defeated Absalom's men. ³The soldiers returned to the city quietly and ashamed, as if they had lost the battle instead of winning it. ⁴The king covered his face with his hands and kept crying loudly, "O, my son Absalom! O, Absalom, my son! My son!"

⁵Joab entered the room where the king was, and said to the king, "Today you have caused your soldiers to be ashamed! You have humiliated the men who saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and your ordinary wives and your slave wives! ⁶It seems that you love those who hate you and that you hate those who love you. Everyone realizes now that your commanders and your officers are not at all important to you. If Absalom were still alive and we were all dead today, you would actually be happy. ⁷So now go and thank your soldiers for what they did. Because I solemnly declare that if you do not do that, none of them will still be with you by tomorrow morning. That would be worse for you than all the disasters that you have experienced since you were a boy."

⁸So the king got up and went and sat at the city gate. And all the people were told, "The king is sitting at the gate!" So they all came and gathered around him.

Meanwhile, all of Absalom's men had gone home.

⁹Then all the people throughout the tribes of Israel started to quarrel among themselves. They said to each other, "The king rescued us from the people of Philistia and from our other enemies. But now he has fled from Absalom and left Israel! ¹⁰We appointed Absalom to be our king, but he died in the battle against David's soldiers. So why does someone not try to bring King David back?"

¹¹King David found out what the people were saying. So he sent the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to say to the leaders of Judah, "The king says that he has heard that all the Israelite people want him to be king again. And he says, 'Why should you be the last ones to bring me back to my palace?' ¹²You are my relatives. We have the same ancestor. So why should you be the last ones to bring me back?" ¹³And say to Amasa, "You are one of my relatives. I hope that God will kill me if I do not appoint you to be, from now on, the commander of my army instead of Joab."

¹⁴By sending that message to them, David convinced all the people of Judah that they should be loyal to him. So they sent a message to the king, saying, "We want you and all your officials to return here." ¹⁵So the king and his officials started back toward Jerusalem. When they reached the Jordan River, the people of Judah came there to Gilgal to meet the king, and to escort him across the river.

¹⁶Shimei, the man from the tribe of Benjamin, also came down quickly to the river with the people of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷There were a thousand men from the tribe of Benjamin who came with him. Ziba, who had been the servant of Saul, also hurried down to the Jordan River, bringing twenty of his servants with him. They all came to the king. ¹⁸They all prepared to take the king and all his family across the river, at the place where they could walk

across it. They wanted to do whatever the king wanted. As the king was about to cross the river, Shimei came to him and prostrated himself in front of the king.

¹⁹He said to the king, "Your Majesty, please forgive me. Please do not keep thinking about the terrible thing that I did on the day that you left Jerusalem. Do not think about it anymore. ²⁰I know that I have sinned. Look, I have come today, the first one from the northern tribes to come here to greet you today, Your Majesty."

²¹But Abishai son of Zeruiah, said to David, "He cursed the one whom Yahweh appointed to be the king! So should he not be executed for doing that?"

²²But David said, "You sons of Zeruiah, what am I going to do with you? It is as though you had become my enemies today. I know that I am still king of Israel, so I say that certainly no one in Israel should be executed today." ²³Then the king said to Shimei, "I solemnly promise that I will not execute you."

²⁴Then Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, came down to the river to greet the king. He had not washed his feet or trimmed his beard or washed his clothes from the time that the king left Jerusalem until the day that he returned. ²⁵When he arrived from Jerusalem to greet the king, the king said to him, "Mephibosheth, why did you not go with me?"

²⁶He replied, "Your Majesty, you know that I am crippled. When I heard that you were leaving Jerusalem, I said to my servant Ziba, 'Put a saddle on my donkey in order that I can ride on it and go with the king.' But he deceived me and left without me. ²⁷He lied to you about me. But your Majesty, you are as wise as God's angel. So do whatever seems right to you. ²⁸All of my grandfather's family expected that we would be executed. But you did not execute me. You allowed me to eat food with you at your table! So I certainly do not have the right to request from you anything more."

²⁹The king replied, "You certainly do not need to say any more. I have decided that you and Ziba will divide equally the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul."

³⁰Mephibosheth replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I am content that you have returned safely. So allow him to take all the land."

³¹Barzillai, the man from the region of Gilead, had come down to the Jordan River from his town of Rogelim to escort the king across the river. ³²Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years old. He was a very wealthy man, and he had provided food for the king and his soldiers while they were at Mahanaim. ³³The king said to Barzillai, "Come with me to Jerusalem, and I will take care of you."

³⁴But Barzillai replied, "I certainly do not have many more years to live. So why should I go with you to Jerusalem?"

³⁵I am eighty years old. I do not know what is enjoyable and what is not enjoyable. I cannot enjoy what I eat and what I drink. I cannot hear the voices of men and women as they sing. So why should I be another burden to you?

³⁶I will cross the Jordan River with you and go a little further, and that will be all the reward that I need for helping you. ³⁷Then please allow me to return to my home, because that is where I want to die, near my parents' grave. But here is my son Kimham. Your Majesty, allow him to go with you and serve you, and do for him whatever seems good to you!"

³⁸The king replied, "Very well, he will cross the river with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you. And I will do for you whatever you want me to do."

³⁹Then King David and all the others crossed the Jordan River. He kissed Barzillai and asked God to bless him. Then Barzillai returned to his home.

⁴⁰After they crossed the river, Kimham went with the king, and all the army of Judah and half the army of the other Israelite tribes escorted the king to Gilgal.

⁴¹Then all the Israelite soldiers from the other Israelite tribes came to the king and said, "Why is it that our relatives, the men from Judah, took you away from us and wanted to be the only ones to escort you and your family across the river, along with all your men? Why did you not request us to do that?"

⁴²The soldiers from Judah replied, "We did it because the king is from Judah. Why are you angry about this? The king has never paid for our food, and he has never given us any gifts."

⁴³The men of the other Israelite tribes replied, "There are ten tribes in Israel, and only one in Judah. So it is ten times more right for us to say that David is our king than it is for you to say that. So why are you despising us? We were certainly the first ones to talk about bringing David back to Jerusalem to be our king again."

But the men of Judah spoke more harshly than the men from the other tribes of Israel did.

Chapter 20

¹There was also a man there at Gilgal named Sheba. He was a man who always caused trouble. He was from the tribe of Benjamin son of Bikri. He blew a trumpet and called out, "We have nothing to do with David, that son of Jesse! So, men of Israel, let us go to our homes!"

²So all the men from the Israelite tribes deserted David and went with Sheba, but the men of Judah stayed with David. They wanted him to be their king, and went with him from near the Jordan River up to Jerusalem.

³When David arrived at the palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten slave wives whom he had left there to take care of the palace and put them in another house. He put a guard at that house, and he provided for them what they needed, but he never had slept with them again. So they remained shut up in their house until they died. It was as though they were widows.

⁴One day the king said to Amasa, "Summon the soldiers of Judah to come here within three days, and you must be here also." ⁵So Amasa went to summon them, but he did not return within the time that David told him to.

⁶So David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba will harm us more than Absalom did. So you take my soldiers and pursue him. If you do not do that, he and his soldiers may occupy some of the fortified cities and escape from us." ⁷So Abishai and Joab and the king's bodyguards and the other soldiers left Jerusalem to pursue Sheba.

⁸When they arrived at the huge rock in the region of Gibeah, Amasa met them. Joab was wearing armor for battle and had a sword fastened to his belt. When he came close to Amasa, he allowed the sword to fall on the ground.

⁹Joab said to Amasa, "Are things going well with you, my friend?" Then Joab grabbed Amasa's beard with his right hand, in order to kiss him. ¹⁰But Amasa did not see that Joab was holding another dagger in his other hand. Joab thrust it into Amasa's belly, and his insides spilled out onto the ground. Amasa died immediately. Joab did not need to stab him again. Then Joab and his brother Abishai continued to pursue Sheba.

¹¹One of Joab's soldiers stood alongside Amasa's body and called out, "Everyone who wants Joab to be our commander and who wants David to be our king, go with Joab!" ¹²Amasa's body was lying on the road. It was covered with blood. The soldier of Joab who had called out saw that many other of Joab's soldiers were stopping to look at it, so he dragged Amasa's body off the road into a field and threw a cloth over the body. ¹³After the body had been taken off the road, all the soldiers went with Joab to pursue Sheba.

¹⁴Sheba went through all the tribes of Israel, and arrived at the city that is called Abel of Beth Maacah in the northern part of Israel. All the members of his father Bikri's clan gathered there and went with Sheba into the city.

¹⁵The soldiers who were with Joab found out that Sheba had gone there, so they went there and surrounded the city. They built a dirt ramp up against the city wall. They also pounded against the wall to cause it to collapse.

¹⁶Then a wise woman who was in that town stood on the top of the wall and shouted down, "Listen to me! Tell Joab

to come here, because I want to talk to him!" ¹⁷So after they told Joab, he came there, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?"

He replied, "Yes, I am." She said to him, "Listen to what I say." He replied, "I am listening." ¹⁸She said, "Long ago people used to say, 'Go to Abel town to get good advice about your problems.' And that is what people did. ¹⁹We are peaceful and loyal Israelites. Our people here are important and respected. So why are you trying to destroy a city that belongs to Yahweh?"

²⁰Joab replied, "I would certainly never want to ruin or destroy your city! ²¹That is not what we want to do. But Bikri's son Sheba, a man from the hill area in the tribe of Ephraim, is rebelling against King David. Put this man into our hands, and then we will go away from this town."

The woman replied to Joab, "Very well; we will cut off his head and throw it over the wall to you."

²²Then this woman went to the elders of the town and told them what she had said to Joab. So they cut off Sheba's head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Then Joab blew his trumpet to signal that the battle was ended, and all his soldiers left the town and returned to their homes. Joab returned to Jerusalem and told the king what had happened.

²³Joab was the commander of the entire Israelite army. Jehoiada's son Benaiah was the commander of David's bodyguards. ²⁴Adoniram supervised the men who were forced to work for the king. Ahilud's son Jehoshaphat was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided. ²⁵Sheva was the official secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, ²⁶and Ira from Jair town was also one of David's priests.

Chapter 21

¹There was a famine in Israel for three years that occurred in the time that David ruled. David prayed to Yahweh about it. And Yahweh said, "In order for the famine to end, Saul's family need to be punished because Saul killed many people from the city of Gibeon."

²The people of Gibeon were not native born Israelites. They were a small group of the Amor people group whom the Israelites had solemnly promised to protect when they invaded the land of Canaan. But Saul had tried to kill all of them because he was very eager to enable the people of Judah and Israel to be the only ones living in that land. So the king summoned the leaders of Gibeon ³and said to them, "What should I do for you? How can I make up for what Saul did to your people, in order that you will bless us who belong to Yahweh and have so many good things from him?"

⁴They replied, "You cannot settle our quarrel with Saul and his family by giving us silver or gold. And we do not have the right to kill any Israelites."

So David asked, "Then what do you say that I should do for you?" ⁵They replied, "Saul wanted to get rid of us. He wanted to annihilate all of us, in order that none of us would live anywhere in Israel. ⁶Put seven of Saul's descendants into our hands. We will hang them where Yahweh is worshiped in Gibeon, our city, the city where Saul, whom Yahweh chose to be king, lived."

The king replied, "Very well, I will hand them over to you." ⁷The king did not hand over Saul's grandson Mephibosheth to them, because of what he and Mephibosheth's father Jonathan had solemnly promised to each other. ⁸Instead, he took the two sons of Rizpah and Saul, named Armoni and Mephibosheth—Rizpah was the daughter of Aiah and had been Saul's slave wife; David also the five sons of Merab, Saul's daughter. Merab's husband was Adriel son of Barzillai, was from the city of Meholah. ⁹David handed these men over to the people of Gibeon. They took those seven men to Gibeon and hanged them on a hill where they worshiped Yahweh. They died during the time of the year that the people started to harvest the barley.

¹⁰Then Rizpah took coarse cloth made from goats' hair, and spread it on the rock where the corpses lay. She stayed there from the time that people started to harvest the barley until the rains started. She did not allow any birds to come near the corpses during the day, and she did not allow any animals to come near during the night.

¹¹Someone told David what Rizpah had done. ¹²So he went with some of his servants to Jabesh in the region of Gilead and got the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. The people of Jabesh had stolen their bones from the plaza in the city of Beth Shan, where the men from Philistia had hanged them on the day that they had killed Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa. ¹³David and his men took the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and they also took the bones of the seven men from Gibeon who had been hanged.

¹⁴David's servants went to the tomb of Saul's father Kish, in the city of Zela in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. There they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan also. In this way, they did all that the king had commanded them to do. After that, because God saw that Saul's family had been punished to pay for Saul's murder of many people from Gibeon, he answered the Israelites' prayers for their land, and caused the famine to end.

¹⁵The army of Philistia again started to fight against the army of Israel. And David and his soldiers went to fight them. During the battle, David became tired. ¹⁶One of the Philistine men thought that he could kill David. His name was Ishbi-Benob. He was a descendant of a group of giants. He carried a bronze spear that weighed almost three and one-half kilograms, and he also had a new sword. ¹⁷But Abishai came to help David, and attacked the giant and killed him. Then David's soldiers forced David to promise that he would not go with them into a battle again. They said to him, "If you die, and none of your descendants become king, that would be like extinguishing the last light in Israel."

¹⁸Some time after that, there was a battle with the army of Philistia near the village of Gob. During the battle, Sibbekai, from the clan of Hushah, killed Saph, one of the descendants of the Rapha giants.

¹⁹Later there was another battle with the army of Philistia at Gob. During that battle, Elhanan son of Jair from Bethlehem, killed the brother of Goliath from Gath, whose spear shaft was very thick, like the bar on a weaver's loom.

²⁰Later there was another battle near Gath. There was a huge man there who liked to fight in battles. He had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was descended from the Rapha giants. ²¹But when he insulted the men in the Israelite army, Jonathan son of Shimeah, David's older brother, killed him.

²²Those four men were some of the descendants of the Rapha giants who had lived in Gath, who were killed by David and his soldiers.

Chapter 22

¹After Yahweh had rescued David from Saul and his other enemies, David sang a song to Yahweh. ²This is what he sang:

"Yahweh, you are like a huge rock on top of which I can hide.

You are like a fortress, and you rescue me.

³Yahweh, you protect me. You are like a shield,

and you are the powerful one who saves me.

You are like a place where I find refuge.

You save me from those who act violently toward me.

⁴I call out to you, Yahweh.

You deserve to be praised,
and you rescue me from my enemies.

⁵I almost died. It was as if a huge wave had crashed over me,
and almost destroyed me like a flood.

⁶I thought that I would die. It was as though death had wrapped ropes around me,
and it was as though I were in a trap where I would surely die.

⁷But when I was very distressed, I called out to you, Yahweh.

I cried out to you, my God.

You heard me from your temple.

You listened when I called to you to help me.

⁸Then it was as though the earth quaked and shook.

It was as though the foundations that held up the sky trembled,
because you were angry.

⁹It was as though smoke poured out of your nostrils
and burning coals and fire that burns everything came out of your mouth.

¹⁰You tore open the skies and came down.

There was a thick dark cloud under your feet.

¹¹You rode through the sky on a winged creature.

The wind enabled you to travel swiftly, like a bird.

¹²The darkness was around you, like a blanket
thick clouds that were full of water surrounded you.

¹³Out of the lightning in front of you
fire from burning coals flamed.

¹⁴Then, Yahweh, you spoke like thunder from the sky.

It was your voice, God, you who are greater than all other gods, that was heard.

¹⁵When you sent flashes of lightning,
it was as though you shot your arrows and scattered your enemies.

¹⁶Then the bottom of the ocean was uncovered.

The foundations of the world could be seen
when you shouted, going into battle against our enemies
and angry at them.

¹⁷Yahweh, you reached down from heaven and lifted me up.
You pulled me up from the deep water.

¹⁸You rescued me from my strong enemies,
from those who hated me.
I could not defeat them because they were very strong.

¹⁹They attacked me when I was experiencing troubles,
but Yahweh, you protected me.

²⁰You brought me into a place where I was safe.
You rescued me because you were pleased with me.

²¹Yahweh, you rewarded me because I do what is right.
You did good things for me because I was innocent.

²²Yahweh, I have obeyed your laws.
I have not stopped worshiping you, my God.

²³All of your decrees were in my mind,
and I did not stop obeying all your decrees.

²⁴You know that I have not done anything that is evil.
I have kept myself from doing things for which you would punish me.

²⁵So you have rewarded me in return for my doing what is right,
because you know that I am innocent of doing wrong things.

²⁶Yahweh, you are faithful to those who always trust in you,
and you always do what is good to those whose behavior is always good.

²⁷You act sincerely toward those whose inner beings are pure,
but you are hostile to those who are perverse.

²⁸You rescue those who are humble,
but you watch those who are proud and humiliate them.

²⁹Yahweh, you are like a lamp
that causes it to become light when I am in the darkness.

³⁰With your strength I can break through a line of soldiers blocking my way;
I can climb over the wall that surrounds their city.

³¹My God whom I worship, everything that you do is perfect.
You always do what you promise that you will do.

You are like a shield to all those who request you to protect them.

³²Yahweh, you are the only one who is God.

Only you are like a huge rock on top of which we are protected.

³³God, you whom I worship are a strong refuge for me.

You lead anyone who is pure in the way he should go.

³⁴When I walk in the mountains,

you enable me to walk safely

as a deer runs, without stumbling.

³⁵You teach me how to fight in a battle

in order that I can shoot arrows well from a very strong bow.

³⁶It is as though you have given me a shield

by which you have saved me,

and you have answered my prayers and caused me to become famous.

³⁷You have not allowed my enemies to capture me,

and I have not fallen down during battle.

³⁸I pursued my enemies and defeated them.

I did not stop fighting them until they were all killed.

³⁹I struck them down. I stabbed them with my sword,

and they fell down at my feet and did not stand up again.

⁴⁰You have given me strength for fighting battles

and caused those who were attacking me to fall down; I trampled on them.

⁴¹You caused my enemies to turn and run away from me.

I destroyed those who hated me.

⁴²They looked for someone to rescue them, but no one did.

They cried out to you, Yahweh, for help, but you did not answer them.

⁴³I crushed them, and they became like tiny particles of dust.

I trampled them, and they became like mud in the streets.

⁴⁴You rescued me from those who tried to rebel against me,

and you appointed me to rule many nations.

People whom I did not know previously are now under my authority.

⁴⁵Foreigners humbly bowed down in front of me.

As soon as they heard about me, they obeyed me.

⁴⁶They became afraid,

and they came to me, trembling, from the places where they were hiding.

⁴⁷Yahweh, you are alive! I praise you! You are like a huge rock on top of which I am safe!

You are the one who rescues me.

Everyone should exalt you.

⁴⁸You enable me to conquer my enemies,

and you cause people of other nations to be under my authority.

⁴⁹You delivered me from my enemies,

and you caused me to be honored more than they were.

You rescued me from men who always acted violently.

⁵⁰Because of all this, I praise you among many people groups,

and I sing to praise you.

⁵¹You enable me, whom you appointed to be king, to conquer my enemies.

You faithfully love me, David, and you will love my descendants forever.”

Chapter 23

¹David son of Jesse, was a man whom God caused to become great.

The God whom Jacob worshiped made him king of Israel.

David wrote beautiful songs for the people of Israel.

This is the last song that he wrote:

²“The Spirit of Yahweh tells me what to say.

The message that I speak comes from him.

³God, the one whom we Israelite people worship, has spoken.

The one who protects us people of Israel said to me,

‘Kings who rule fairly over people

have an awesome respect for me, God.

⁴They are like the sun that shines at dawn

and causes the grass to sprout after the rain ends.’

⁵And truly, that is how God will surely bless my family

because he made a covenant with me that will last forever,

a covenant in which he promises that no part of it will ever be changed.

He will surely cause me to prosper,

and he will always help me,

and that is all that I desire.

⁶But he will get rid of people who do not honor him, just as people throw away thorns that injure people if they try to pick them up with their hands.

⁷Someone who wants to get rid of thornbushes does not grab them, but he uses an iron shovel or a spear to dig them out and then he burns them completely.”

⁸These are the names of David's greatest soldiers.

The first was Jeshbaal, from the Hachmon clan. He was the leader of the greatest soldiers. Once he fought against eight hundred enemies and killed them all with his spear.

⁹The second of the greatest warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, who was from the clan of Ahoh. One day he was with David when they defied the soldiers of Philistia who had gathered there for the battle. The other Israelite soldiers retreated, ¹⁰but Eleazar stood there and fought the soldiers of Philistia until his arm became very tired, with the result that his hand cramped and he could not stop gripping his sword. Yahweh won a great victory on that day. And afterwards the other Israelite soldiers returned to where Eleazar was, and stripped off the armor from the men whom he had killed.

¹¹The third of the greatest warriors was Shammah son of Agee from the clan of Harar. One time the Philistine soldiers gathered at the city of Lehi, where there was a field full of lentils that they wanted to steal. The other Israelite soldiers ran away from the Philistine troops, ¹²but Shammah stood there in the field and did not let the Philistine soldiers steal the peas, and killed them. Yahweh won a great victory on that day.

¹³At one time, when it was almost time to harvest the crops, three of those thirty men went down to the Cave of Adullam, where David was staying. A group of men from the Philistine army had set up their tents in the Valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem. ¹⁴David and his soldiers were in the cave because it was safe there, and another group of Philistine soldiers was occupying Bethlehem. ¹⁵One day David very much wanted some water to drink, and said, “I wish that someone would bring me some water from the well near the gate at Bethlehem!” ¹⁶So his three greatest warriors forced through the camp of Philistine soldiers and drew some water from the well, and brought it to David. But he would not drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground to be an offering to Yahweh. ¹⁷He said, “Yahweh, it would certainly not be right for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of these men who were willing to die for me!” So he refused to drink it.

That was one of the things that those three great warriors did.

¹⁸Abishai, Joab's younger brother, was the leader of David's greatest soldiers. One day he fought against three hundred men and killed them all with his spear. As a result, he also became famous. ¹⁹He was the most famous of the greatest soldiers, and he became their leader, but even he was not one of the three greatest warriors.

²⁰Jehoiada's son Benaiah, from the city of Kabzeel, also did great deeds. He killed two of the best warriors from the Moab people group. Also, he went down into a pit on a day when snow was falling on the ground, and killed a lion there. ²¹He also killed a huge soldier from Egypt who carried a spear. Benaiah had only his club, but he attacked the giant with it. Then he snatched the spear from the man's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²²Those are some of the things that Benaiah did. As a result, he became famous, like the three greatest warriors were. ²³He

was more honored than the other greatest soldiers, but not as famous as the three greatest. David appointed him to be the commander of his bodyguards.

²⁴These are the names of the great warriors:

Asahel, the younger brother of Joab,

Elhanan son of Dodo, from Bethlehem,

²⁵Shammah and Elikah, from the clan of Harod,

²⁶Helez, from the city of Pelet,

Ira son of Ikkesh, from the city of Tekoa,

²⁷Abiezer, from the city of Anathoth,

Mebunnai whose other name was Sibbekai, from Hushah's clan,

²⁸Zalmon whose other name was Ilai, from Ahoh's clan,

Maharai, from the city of Netophah,

²⁹Heleb son of Baanah, also from Netophah,

Ithai son of Ribai, from the city of Gibeah in the land that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin,

³⁰Benaiah, from the city of Pirathon,

Hiddai, from the valleys near the valleys of Gaash,

³¹Abi-Albon, from the clan of Arabah,

Azmaveth, from the city of Bahurim,

³²Eliabha, from the city of Shaalbon—

The sons of Jashen,

Jonathan son of Shammah from the city of Harar,

³³Ahiam the son of Sharar, from Harar,

³⁴Eliphelet son of Ahasbai, from the city of Maacah,

Eliam son of Ahithophel, from the city of Gilo,

³⁵Hezro, from the city of Carmel,

Paarai, from the city of Arba,

³⁶Igal son of Nathan, from the city of Zobah,

Bani, from the tribe of Gad;

³⁷Zelek, from the Ammon people group,

Naharai, the man who carried Joab's weapons, from the city of Beeroth,

³⁸Ira and Gareb, from the city of Jattir,

³⁹Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, from the Heth people group.

Altogether, there were thirty-seven famous soldiers.

Chapter 24

¹Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people again, so he incited David to cause trouble for them. He said to David, "Send some men to count the people of Israel and Judah."

²So the king said to Joab, the commander of his army, "Go with your officers through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan in the far north to Beersheba in the far south, and count the people, in order that I may know how many people there are who are able to be soldiers in the army."

³But Joab replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I wish that Yahweh our God will cause there to be a hundred times as many people in Israel as there are now, and I wish that you would see that happen before you die. But why do you want us to do this?"

⁴But the king commanded Joab and his officers to do it. So they left the king and went out to count the people of Israel.

⁵They crossed the Jordan River and set up their tents south of Aroer, in the middle of the valley, in the territory that was given to the tribe of Gad. From there they went north to Jazer. ⁶Then they went north to Gilead and to Kadesh, in the land where the Heth people group lived. Then they went to Dan in the far north of Israel, and then further west, to Sidon near the Mediterranean Sea. ⁷Then they went south to Tyre, a city with high walls around it, and to all the cities where the Hiv and Canaan people groups lived. Then they went east to Beersheba, in the southern wilderness of Judah.

⁸After nine months and twenty days, when they had finished going throughout the land and counting the people, they returned to Jerusalem.

⁹They reported to the king the number of people that they had counted. There were 800,000 men in Israel and 500,000 men in Judah who were able to become soldiers in the army.

¹⁰But after David's men had counted the people, David regretted that he had told them to do that. One night he said to Yahweh, "I have committed a very great sin. Please forgive me, because what I have done is very foolish."

¹¹When David got up the next morning, Yahweh gave a message to the prophet Gad. He said to him, ¹²"Go and tell this to David, 'I am allowing you to choose one of three things to punish you. I will do whichever one you choose.'"

¹³So Gad went to David and told him what Yahweh had said. He said to David, "You can choose whether there will be three years of famine in your land, or three months of your army running away from your enemies, or three days when there will be a plague in your land. You must think about it and choose which one you want, and tell me, and I will return to Yahweh and tell him what your answer is."

¹⁴David said to Gad, "All those are very terrible things for me to choose between! But allow Yahweh to punish me, because he is very merciful. Do not allow humans to punish me, because they will not be merciful."

¹⁵So Yahweh sent a plague on the Israelite people. It started that morning and did not stop until the time that he had chosen. All over the land, from Dan to Beersheba, there were seventy thousand Israelites who died because of the plague. ¹⁶When Yahweh's angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy the people by this plague, Yahweh grieved about punishing any more people. He said to the angel who was killing them with the plague, "Stop what you are doing! That is enough!" When he said that, the angel was standing at the ground where Araunah, from the Jebus people group, threshed grain.

¹⁷When David saw the angel who was causing the people to become sick and die, he said to Yahweh, "Truly, I am the one who has committed the sin. I have done a very wicked thing, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So you should punish me and my family, not these people!"

¹⁸That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up to the place where Araunah threshes grain, and build an altar to worship Yahweh there." ¹⁹So David did what Gad told him to do, which was what Yahweh had commanded, and he went up there. ²⁰When Araunah looked down and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he prostrated himself on the ground in front of the king, with his face touching the ground.

²¹Araunah said, "Your Majesty, why have you come to me?" David replied, "I have come to buy this ground where you thresh grain, in order to build an altar to Yahweh and offer sacrifices on it, so that he will stop the plague."

²²Araunah replied to David, "Your Majesty, offer to Yahweh whatever you wish. Here, take my oxen to use for the offering that will be completely burned on the altar. And here, take their yokes and the boards that I use for the threshing, and use them for the wood that you will burn. ²³I, Araunah, am giving all this to you, my king." Then he said, "I desire that Yahweh our God will accept your offering."

²⁴But the king said to Araunah, "No, I will not take these things as a gift. I will pay you for it. I will not offer sacrifices that have cost me nothing, and offer them to Yahweh to be completely burned on the altar." So he paid fifty pieces of silver to Araunah for the oxen and the ground.

²⁵Then David built an altar to Yahweh, and he offered the oxen to be completely burned on the altar, and he also offered sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh. Then, Yahweh answered David's prayers, and he caused the plague in Israel to end.

1 Kings

Chapter 1

¹When King David was very old, even though his servants put many blankets on top of him at night, he was unable to keep warm. ²So they said to him, "Your Majesty, allow us to search for a young virgin who can stay with you and take care of you. She can sleep close to you and make you warm."

³The king gave them permission, so they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman. They found a woman named Abishag, from the town of Shunem, and brought her to the king. ⁴She was truly very beautiful. She took care of the king, but the king did not have sexual relations with her.

⁵⁻⁶After Absalom died, David's oldest son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. He was a very handsome man. But David had never rebuked him about anything he did. After Absalom died, he thought that he would become king. So he started to boast, saying, "I will become king now." Then he provided for himself some chariots, and men to drive them, and horses to pull them, and fifty men to run as his bodyguards in front of those chariots wherever he went.

⁷One day he conferred with Joab, David's army commander, and Abiathar the priest, and they promised to help Adonijah. ⁸But other important people refused to help him. These included Zadok, who was also a priest, Benaiah who had supervised David's bodyguards, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei, and David's most capable soldiers.

⁹One day Adonijah went to the stone of Zohemoth near En Rogel, which is near Jerusalem, to sacrifice some sheep and oxen and fattened cattle. He invited most of his brothers, King David's other sons, to come. He also invited all of the king's officials from Judah to come to the celebration. ¹⁰But he did not invite Nathan, Benaiah, or the king's most capable soldiers, or his younger brother Solomon.

¹¹Nathan found out what they were doing, so he went to Solomon's mother Bathsheba and asked her, "Have you not heard that Haggith's son Adonijah is making himself king? And King David does not know about it! ¹²So if you want to save yourself and your son Solomon from being killed, allow me to tell you what you should do. ¹³Go right away to King David. Say to him, 'Your Majesty, you solemnly promised me that my son Solomon would become the king after you die and that he would sit on your throne and rule. So why are people saying that Adonijah is now king?' ¹⁴Then, Bathsheba, while you are still talking to the king, I will come in and tell him that what you are saying to him about Adonijah is true."

¹⁵So Bathsheba went to see the king in his bedroom. He was very old, and Abishag was taking care of him.

¹⁶Bathsheba bowed very low in front of the king, and the king asked her, "What do you want?"

¹⁷She replied, "Your Majesty, you solemnly promised me, knowing that Yahweh our God was listening, that my son Solomon would become king after you die and that he would sit on your throne and rule. ¹⁸But now, Adonijah has made himself king, and you do not know anything about it. ¹⁹He has sacrificed a lot of oxen and fattened cattle and sheep, and he has invited all of your other sons to the celebration. He has also invited Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of your army, but he did not invite your son Solomon. ²⁰Your Majesty, all the people of Israel are expecting you to tell them who is the one who will become king after you are no longer with us. ²¹If you do not do that, what will happen is that after you die people will consider that my son Solomon and I are rebelling, and they will execute us because we did not help Adonijah to become king."

²²While she was still talking to the king, Nathan came to the palace. ²³The king's servants told David, "Nathan the prophet has come." So Bathsheba left, and Nathan went into where the king was and knelt down, with his face on the ground.

²⁴Then Nathan said, "Your Majesty, have you declared that Adonijah will become king after you? ²⁵I say that because today he has gone down to En Rogel and has sacrificed a lot of oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep. And he has invited all of your other sons, Joab the army commander, and Abiathar the priest. They are all eating and drinking with him and saying, 'We hope that King Adonijah will live a long time!' ²⁶But he did not invite me or Zadok the priest or Benaiah or Solomon. ²⁷Did you say that they should do this without telling your other officials who you want to become king after you are no longer the king?"

²⁸Then King David said, "Tell Bathsheba to come in here again." So someone went and told her, and she came in and stood in front of the king.

²⁹⁻³⁰Then the king said, "Yahweh has rescued me from all my troubles. I promised you, with Yahweh the God whom we Israelites worship listening, that your son Solomon would be king after I am no longer the king. Today, as surely as Yahweh lives, I solemnly declare that I will do what I promised." ³¹Bathsheba knelt down with her face on the ground and said, "Your Majesty, I hope you will live forever!"

³²Then King David said to a servant, "Summon Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah." So a servant went and summoned them. When they came in, ³³he said to them, "Put my son Solomon on my mule. Take him with my officials down to the spring at Gihon. ³⁴There, you two, Zadok and Nathan, must anoint him with olive oil to appoint him to be the king of Israel. Then you two must blow trumpets, and all the people there must shout, 'We hope that King Solomon will live for many years!' ³⁵Then follow him back here, and he will come and sit on my throne. He will then become king instead of me. I have appointed him to be the ruler of all the people of Israel and of Judah."

³⁶Benaiah replied, "We will do that! We hope that Yahweh, who is your God and our God, will cause it to happen!"

³⁷King David, Yahweh has helped you. We hope that he will also help Solomon and enable him to become an even greater king than you have been."

³⁸So Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and the two groups of men who were the king's bodyguards went and put Solomon on King David's mule and escorted him down to the spring at Gihon. ³⁹There Zadok took the container of olive oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then two of them blew trumpets, and all the people shouted, "We hope that King Solomon will live for many years!" ⁴⁰Then all the people followed him back up to the city, shouting joyfully and playing flutes. They shouted very loudly, so that the ground shook.

⁴¹When Adonijah and all his guests were finishing eating at their celebration, they heard the noise. When Joab heard the sound of the trumpets, he asked, "What is the meaning of all that noise in the city?"

⁴²While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest, arrived. Adonijah said, "Come in! You are a man whom we can trust, so you must be bringing us good news!"

⁴³Jonathan replied, "No, I do not have good news! His Majesty, King David, has made Solomon to be the king! ⁴⁴He sent Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and the his own groups of bodyguards to go with Solomon. They put Solomon on King David's mule. ⁴⁵They went down to the spring at Gihon, and there Zadok and Nathan have anointed him to become the king. Now they have returned from there to the city, shouting joyfully. That is why there is that great noise that you are hearing. ⁴⁶So Solomon is now our king. ⁴⁷Furthermore, the palace officials came to His Majesty, King David, to tell him that they approved of what he had done. They said, 'We wish that God will make Solomon even more famous than you have been and enable him to be an even better king than you have been.' When they said that, the king, lying on his bed, bowed his head to worship Yahweh. ⁴⁸Then he said, 'I praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, because he has allowed one of my sons to become the king today and has permitted me to see it happen.'"

⁴⁹Then all of Adonijah's guests trembled, so they all immediately got up and left and scattered. ⁵⁰Adonijah was afraid of what Solomon would do, so he went to the sacred tent and grabbed the projections at the corners of the altar, because he thought that no one would kill him there. ⁵¹But someone told Solomon, "See, Adonijah is afraid of

you, so he has gone to the sacred tent and is holding on to the altar. He is saying, 'Before I leave, I want King Solomon to solemnly promise that he will not command that I be executed.'"

⁵²Solomon replied, "If he proves that he is loyal to me, I will not harm him at all. But if he does anything that is wrong, he will be executed." ⁵³So King Solomon sent some men to Adonijah, and they brought him back from the altar. He came to Solomon and bowed down in front of him. Then Solomon said to him, "Go home."

Chapter 2

¹When David knew that he was about to die, he gave these final instructions to his son Solomon:

²"I am about to die, as everyone else on earth does. Be courageous and conduct yourself as man should. ³Do what Yahweh our God tells you to do. Conduct yourself as he wants you to do. Obey all of his laws and commands and decrees and instructions that are written in the laws that Moses gave us. Do this in order that you will prosper in all that you do and wherever you go. ⁴If you continually do that, Yahweh will do what he promised me. He said, 'If your descendants do what I tell them to do, and faithfully obey my commands with all their inner beings, they will always be the ones who will rule Israel.'

⁵There is something else that I want you to do. You know what Joab did to me. He killed my two army commanders, Abner and Amasa. He murdered them violently. He is guilty of murder. ⁶Because you are wise, do to him what you think is best for you to do, but do not allow him to become old and die peacefully.

⁷But act kindly toward the sons of Barzillai, the man from the region of Gilead, and be sure that they always have enough food to eat. Do that because Barzillai helped me when I was running away from your older brother Absalom.

⁸Also, you remember Gera's son Shimei from the town of Bahurim in the area where the descendants of Benjamin live. You know what he did to me. He cursed me terribly on the day I left Jerusalem and went to the town of Mahanaim. But when he later came down to see me when I was crossing the Jordan River, I solemnly promised, while Yahweh listened, that I would not cause him to be executed. ⁹But now you must surely punish him. You are a wise man, so you will know what you should do to him. He is an old man, but be sure that his blood flows when he dies."

¹⁰Then David died and was buried in that part of Jerusalem which was called the city of David. ¹¹David had been king of Israel for forty years. He ruled for seven years in Hebron and for thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹²Solomon became the ruler to take the place of his father David and took control of all of the kingdom.

¹³One day Adonijah came to Solomon's mother Bathsheba. She said to him, "Have you come because you want things to go well?" He replied, "Yes."

¹⁴But then he said, "I have something to request you to do." She said, "Tell me what you want me to do."

¹⁵He said, "You know that all the Israelite people expected me to be their king because I am David's oldest son. But that did not happen. Instead, my younger brother became king, because that is what Yahweh wanted. ¹⁶Now I have one thing that I request you to do. Please do not refuse to do it." She replied, "Tell me what you want me to do."

¹⁷He said, "Please ask King Solomon to give to me Abishag, the woman from the town of Shunem, to be my wife. I am sure that he will not refuse."

¹⁸Bathsheba replied, "Very well, I will speak to the king for you."

¹⁹So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to tell him what Adonijah wanted. The king got up from his throne and went to greet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne again and asked someone to bring a chair for her. So she sat down at the king's right side.

²⁰Then she said, "I have one small thing that I want you do. Please do not say that you will not do it." The king replied, "Mother, what do you want? I will not refuse you."

²¹She said, "Allow Abishag to be given to your older brother Adonijah to be his wife."

²²The king replied angrily, "What? Are you requesting me to give Abishag to Adonijah? Does he want me to allow him to rule the kingdom, too? Because he is my older brother, does he think that he should be the king? Does he think that Abiathar should be the priest instead of Zadok, and that Joab should be the army commander instead of Benaiah because they supported him when he tried to become the king?"

²³Then Solomon solemnly promised, requesting Yahweh to listen, "I wish God to strike me and kill me if I do not cause Adonijah to be executed for requesting this! ²⁴Yahweh has appointed me to be the king and placed me here to rule as my father David did. He has promised that my descendants will be the kings of Israel. So just as surely as Yahweh lives, I solemnly promise that Adonijah will be executed today!" ²⁵So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah to go and kill Adonijah, and Benaiah did that.

²⁶Then Solomon said to Abiathar the priest, "Go to the town of Anathoth, to your land there. You deserve to be killed, but I will not execute you now, because you were the one who supervised the men who carried Yahweh's sacred chest for David my father, and you endured all the troubles that my father endured." ²⁷So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being the priest of Yahweh. By doing that he caused to happen what Yahweh had said many years previously at Shiloh, that some day he would get rid of the descendants of Eli.

²⁸Joab had not supported Absalom when he tried to become the king, but he had supported Adonijah. So when Joab heard what had happened, he ran to the sacred tent, and he took hold of the altar because he thought that no one would kill him there. ²⁹When someone told Solomon that Joab had run to the sacred tent and was alongside the altar, Solomon told Benaiah, "Go and execute Joab."

³⁰So Benaiah went to the sacred tent and said to Joab, "The king commands that you come out." But Joab replied, "No, I will die here." So Benaiah went back to the king and reported what he had said to Joab, and what Joab had replied.

³¹The king replied to him, "Do what he has requested. Kill him and bury his body. If you do that, I and my descendants will no longer be punished for what Joab did when he killed two men who were innocent. ³²But I hope that Yahweh will punish Joab for attacking and killing Abner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa, the commander of the army of Judah, who were both much better men than he is. My father David did not even know that Joab was planning to murder them. ³³I hope that Yahweh will punish Joab and his descendants forever for his murdering Abner and Amasa. But I hope that things will go well forever for David's descendants who rule as he did."

³⁴So Benaiah went into the sacred tent and killed Joab. Joab was buried on his property in the wilderness of Judah.

³⁵Then the king appointed Benaiah to be the commander of the army instead of Joab, and he appointed Zadok to be the priest instead of Abiathar.

³⁶Then the king sent a messenger to summon Shimei, and the king said to him, "Build a house for yourself here in Jerusalem. Remain there and do not leave the city to go anywhere. ³⁷Be sure that the day that you leave Jerusalem and go across the Kidron Brook, you will be executed, and it will be your own fault."

³⁸Shimei replied, "Your Majesty, what you say is good. I will do what you have said." So Shimei remained in Jerusalem for several years.

³⁹But three years later, two of Shimei's slaves ran away. They went to stay with Maacah's son Achish, the king of the city of Gath. When someone told Shimei that they were in Gath, ⁴⁰he put a saddle on his donkey and got on the donkey and went to Gath. He found his slaves staying with King Achish and brought them back home.

⁴¹But someone told King Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had returned. ⁴²So the king sent a soldier to summon Shimei and said to him, "I told you to solemnly promise, knowing that Yahweh was listening, that you must not leave Jerusalem. I told you, 'Be sure that if you ever leave Jerusalem, you will be executed.' And you replied to me, 'What you have said is good; I will do what you have said.' ⁴³So why did you not do what you solemnly promised to Yahweh? Why did you disobey what I commanded you?"

⁴⁴The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your inner being all the evil things that you did to my father David. So Yahweh will now punish you for the evil things that you did. ⁴⁵But Yahweh will bless me, and he will enable David's descendants to rule forever."

⁴⁶Then the king gave a command to Benaiah son of Jehoiada. He went out and put Shimei to death.

So Solomon obtained complete control of the kingdom.

Chapter 3

¹Now Solomon made an agreement to marry the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Then Solomon brought the king's daughter to live in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. She lived there until Solomon's workers had finished building his house, the temple of Yahweh, and the wall around Jerusalem. ²At that time the temple of Yahweh had not yet been built, so the Israelite people were still offering sacrifices at many other places of worship. ³Solomon loved Yahweh, and he obeyed all the instructions that his father David had given him. But he also offered sacrifices and burned incense at various places.

⁴One day the king went to the city of Gibeon to offer a sacrifice there, because that was where a very famous place of worship was. He offered a thousand whole burnt sacrifices there. ⁵That night, Yahweh appeared to him at Gibeon in a dream. He asked him, "What would you like me to give to you?"

⁶Solomon replied, "You always greatly and faithfully loved my father David, who served you well. You did that because he was faithful to you and acted righteously and honestly toward you. And you have shown how greatly and faithfully you loved him by giving me to him, his son, and now I am ruling as he did before he died.

⁷Now, Yahweh my God, you have enabled me to be the king like my father was. But I am very young, like a little child. I do not know how to rule my people at all. ⁸I live among the people whom you have chosen. They are a very large group of people. There are very, very many of them; no one can count them. ⁹So please enable me to think clearly, in order that I may rule your people well. Enable me to know what is good and what is evil. If you do not do that, I will never be able to rule this great group of people who belong to you."

¹⁰Yahweh was very pleased that Solomon had requested that. ¹¹God said to him, "You did not request that you live for many years or that you become very rich or that you be able to kill all your enemies. Instead, you have requested that I enable you to be wise, in order that you will be able to know and to do what is right while you govern these people. ¹²So I will certainly do what you requested. I will enable you to be very wise. The result will be that no one who has lived before you or who will live after you will be as wise as you are. ¹³I will also give you things that you did not request. I will enable you to become very rich and honored, all of the years that you live. You will be richer and more honored than any other king. ¹⁴If you conduct your life as I want you to, and if you obey all my laws and commandments, as your father David did, I will enable you to live for many years."

¹⁵Then Solomon awoke, and he realized that God had spoken to him in a dream. Then he went to Jerusalem and stood in front of the sacred tent where the sacred chest was, and he offered many sacrifices that were completely burned on the altar and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. Then he made a feast for all his officials.

¹⁶One day two prostitutes came and stood in front of King Solomon. ¹⁷One of them said, "Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby while she was there in the house. ¹⁸On the third day after my baby was born, this woman also gave birth to a baby. Only the two of us were in the house. There was no one else there.

¹⁹But one night this woman's baby died because she accidentally rolled on top of her baby and smothered it. ²⁰So she got up at midnight and took my baby boy who was lying beside me while I was sleeping. She carried him to her bed and brought her dead baby and put it in my bed. ²¹When I awoke the next morning and was ready to nurse my baby, I saw that it was dead. But when I looked at it closely in the morning light, I saw that it was not my baby!"

²²But the other woman said, "That is not true! The baby that is alive is mine, and the baby that is dead is yours!" Then the first woman said, "No, the dead baby is yours, and the one that is alive is mine!" And they continued to argue in front of the king.

²³Then the king said, "Both of you are saying, 'My baby is the one that is alive and the one that is dead is yours.'"

²⁴So he said to one of his servants, "Bring me a sword." So the servant brought a sword to the king. ²⁵Then the king said to the servant, "Cut the baby that is alive into two parts. Give one part to each of the women."

²⁶But the woman whose baby was alive greatly loved her baby, so she said to the king, "No, Your Majesty! Do not allow him to kill the baby! Give her the child that is alive!" But the other woman said to the king, "No, cut it in half. Then it will not be her baby or my baby."

²⁷Then the king said to the servant, "Do not kill the baby. Give the baby to the woman who said, 'Do not cut the baby in half,' because she is truly the baby's mother."

²⁸All the Israelite people heard about what the king had decided, and they had an awesome respect for him. They realized that God had truly enabled him to be very wise, to judge people's matters fairly.

Chapter 4

¹Now when Solomon was king over all Israel, ²these were his most important officials:

Azariah, whose father was Zadok, was the priest.

³Shisha's sons Elihoreph and Ahijah were the official secretaries.

Ahilud's son Jehoshaphat was the one who announced to the people the king's decisions.

⁴Benaiah was the army commander.

Zadok and Abiathar were also priests.

⁵Azariah, whose father was Nathan, was in charge of the governors.

Another of Nathan's sons, Zabud, was a priest and the king's chief advisor.

⁶Ahishar supervised the servants who worked in the palace.

Abda's son Adoniram supervised the men who were forced to do work for the king.

⁷Solomon appointed twelve men to govern the districts in Israel. They also were required to provide food for the king and all the others who lived and worked in the palace. Each man was required to provide from his own district the food for one month in each year. ⁸Their names were:

Ben-Hur, for the hill area of the tribe of Ephraim.

⁹Ben-Deker, for the cities of Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Bethhanan,

¹⁰Ben-Hesed, for the cities of Arubboth and Sokoh and the area near the city of Hepher,

¹¹Ben-Abinadab, who was married to Solomon's daughter Taphath, for all the district of Dor,

¹²Ahilud's son Baana, for the cities of Taanach and Megiddo, for all the region near the city of Zarethan, and from the city of Beth Shan south of Jezreel as far as the cities of Abel Meholah and Jokmeam,

¹³Ben-Geber, for the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead, for the villages in Gilead that belonged to Jair, who was a descendant of Manasseh, and for the area of Argob in the region of Bashan. There were sixty large cities in that region altogether, each city with a wall around it and bronze bars across the gates.

¹⁴Iddo's son Ahinadab, for the city of Mahanaim east of the Jordan River;

¹⁵Ahimaaz, who had married Solomon's daughter Basemath, for the territory of the tribe of Naphtali,

¹⁶Hushai's son Baana, for the territory of the tribe of Asher and for the city of Aloth,

¹⁷Paruah's son Jehoshaphat, for the territory of the tribe of Issachar,

¹⁸Ela's son Shimei, for the territory of the tribe of Benjamin,

¹⁹Uri's son Geber, for the region of Gilead, the land that Sihon the king of the Amor people group formerly ruled, and Og who formerly ruled the region of Bashan.

In addition to all these, Solomon appointed one governor for the territory of the tribe of Judah.

²⁰There were as many people in Judah and Israel as there are grains of sand on the seashore. They had plenty to eat and drink, and they were happy. ²¹Solomon's kingdom extended from the Euphrates River in the northeast to the region of Philistia in the west and to the border of Egypt in the south. The conquered people in those areas paid taxes and were under Solomon's control all during his life.

²²The people whom Solomon ruled were required to bring to Solomon every day thirty donkey-loads of fine flour and sixty donkey-loads of wheat, ²³ten head of cattle that had been raised in stalls, twenty head of cattle raised in pastures, one hundred sheep, grain-fed poultry—and wild game: deer, gazelle, and roebucks. ²⁴Solomon ruled over all the area west of the Euphrates River, from the city of Tiphseh in the northeast to the city of Gaza in the southwest. He ruled over all the kings in that area. There was peace between his government and the governments of nearby countries. ²⁵All during the years that Solomon ruled, the people of Judah and Israel lived safely.

²⁶Solomon had forty thousand stalls for the horses that pulled his chariots and twelve thousand men who rode on horses.

²⁷His twelve district governors supplied the food that King Solomon needed for himself and for all those who ate in the palace. Each governor supplied food for one month each year. They provided everything that Solomon required. ²⁸They also brought stalks of barley and wheat for the fast horses that pulled the chariots and for the other work horses. They brought this fodder to the places where the horses were kept.

²⁹God enabled Solomon to be extremely wise and to have great understanding. He enjoyed learning about a huge number of things. ³⁰He was wiser than all the wise men in the regions east of Israel, and all the wise men in Egypt.

³¹Ethan from Ezrah and Heman and Kalkol and Darda and the sons of Mahol were considered to be very wise, but Solomon was wiser than all of them. People in all the nearby countries heard about Solomon. ³²He composed more than one thousand songs. ³³He talked about various kinds of plants, from the huge cedar trees in Lebanon to the tiny hyssop plants that grow in cracks in walls. He also talked about wild animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. ³⁴People came from all over the world to hear the wise things that Solomon said. Many kings sent men to listen to him and then return and tell them what Solomon said.

Chapter 5

¹Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, had always been a close friend of King David. When he heard that Solomon had been appointed to become the king after his father was no longer king, he sent messengers to Solomon. ²Solomon gave those messengers this message to take back to Hiram:

³"You know that my father David led his soldiers to fight many wars against his enemies in the nearby countries. So he could not try to build a temple in which we could worship Yahweh our God, until after Yahweh enabled the Israelite army to defeat all his enemies. ⁴But now Yahweh our God has enabled us to have peace with all the surrounding countries. There is no danger that we will be attacked. ⁵Yahweh promised my father David, 'Your son, whom I will enable to be king after you are no longer king, will build a temple for me, Yahweh your God.'

⁶So I am requesting that you command your workers to cut cedar trees for me. My men will work with them, and I will pay your workers whatever you decide. But my men cannot do the work alone, because they do not know how to cut down trees like your workers from the city of Sidon do."

⁷When Hiram heard the message from Solomon, he was very happy and said, "I praise Yahweh today for giving David a very wise son to rule that great nation!"

⁸He sent this message back to Solomon, "I have heard the message that you sent to me, and I am ready to do what you ask. I will provide cedar and cypress logs. ⁹My workers will bring the logs down from the Lebanon mountains to the Mediterranean Sea. Then they will tie them together to make rafts to float them in the water along the coast to the place that you indicate. Then my workers will untie the logs, and your workers will take them from there. What I want you to do is to supply food for my men."

¹⁰So Hiram arranged for his workers to supply all the cedar and cypress logs that Solomon wanted. ¹¹Each year Solomon gave Hiram 3,520 cubic meters of wheat and 416,350 liters of pure olive oil to feed his workers. ¹²Yahweh enabled Solomon to be wise, just like he had promised. Solomon and Hiram made a treaty.

¹³King Solomon forced thirty thousand men from all over Israel to become his workers. ¹⁴Adoniram was their boss. Solomon divided the men into three groups. Each month ten thousand of them went to Lebanon and worked for a month there, and then they came back home for two months. ¹⁵Solomon also forced eighty thousand men to cut stones in the hill country and seventy thousand men to haul the stones to Jerusalem. ¹⁶He also assigned 3,300 men to supervise their work. ¹⁷The king also commanded his workers to cut huge blocks of stones from the quarries and to smooth the sides of the stones. These huge stones were for the foundation of the temple. ¹⁸Solomon's workers and Hiram's workers and men from the city of Gebal shaped the stones and prepared the timber to build the temple.

Chapter 6

¹480 years after the Israelite people left Egypt, during the fourth year that Solomon ruled Israel, in the second month, that of Ziv, Solomon's workers began to build the temple.

²Inside, the main part of the temple was twenty-seven meters long, nine meters wide, and thirteen and one-half meters high. ³The front portico was four and one-half meters deep and nine meters wide, just as wide as the main part of the temple. ⁴There were openings like windows in the temple walls. The openings were narrower on the outside than on the inside. ⁵Against the two sides and the back of the temple walls, they built a structure that had rooms in it. This structure had three levels; each level was two and one-third meters high. ⁶Each room in the lowest level was two and one-third meters wide. Each room in the middle level was two and four-fifths meters wide. The rooms in the top level were three and one-tenth meters wide. The wall of the temple at the top level was thinner than the wall at the middle level, and the wall of the middle level was thinner than the wall at the bottom level. In

this way, the rooms could rest on the wall underneath them; the rooms did not need wooden beams underneath to support them.

⁷The huge stones for the foundation of the temple were cut and shaped at the quarry to become very smooth. The result was that while the workers were building the temple there was no noise, because they did not use hammers or chisels or any other iron tools there.

⁸The entrance to the bottom level of this attached structure was on the south side of the temple. There were stairs from the bottom level to the middle and top levels. ⁹So Solomon's workers finished building the framework of the temple. They made the ceiling from cedar beams and boards. ¹⁰They built the rooms alongside the main chambers with three levels, each two and one-third meters high, and joined them to the temple with cedar beams.

¹¹Then Yahweh said this to Solomon, ¹²"I want to tell you about this temple that you are building. If you continually obey all my statutes and decrees and commands, I will do for you what I promised to your father David. ¹³I will live among the Israelite people, in this temple, and I will never abandon them."

¹⁴Solomon's workers worked to finish building the temple. ¹⁵On the inside, they lined the rooms from the floor to the ceiling. They made the floor from cypress boards. ¹⁶Inside the back part of the temple they built an inner room, called the very holy place. It was nine meters long. All the walls of this room were lined with cedar boards. ¹⁷In front of the very holy place was a room that was eighteen meters long. ¹⁸The cedar boards on the walls inside the temple were decorated with carvings of gourds and flowers. The walls were completely covered with cedar boards, with the result that the stones of the walls behind them could not be seen.

¹⁹At the back of the temple they made the very holy place, in order to put the sacred chest there. ²⁰That room was nine meters long, nine meters wide, and nine meters high. They covered the walls with very thin sheets of pure gold. For burning incense they also made an altar of cedar boards. ²¹Solomon told them to cover the other walls inside the temple with very thin sheets of pure gold and to fasten gold chains across the entrance to the very holy place. ²²They covered all the walls of the temple and the altar that was outside the very holy place with very thin sheets of gold.

²³Inside the very holy place they made from olive tree wood large statues of two creatures with wings. Each one was four and one-half meters tall. ²⁴⁻²⁶They each were the same size and had the same shape. They each had two wings which were spread out. Each wing was two and one-third meters long, with the result that the distance between the outer ends of the two wings was four and one-half meters across. The height of each cherub was four and one-half meters. ²⁷They put these statues next to each other in the very holy place so that the wing of the one touched the one wing of the other in the center of the room, and the outer wings touched the walls. ²⁸They covered the statues with very thin sheets of gold.

²⁹Solomon told them to decorate the walls of the main room and the very holy place by carving representations of winged creatures and palm trees and flowers. ³⁰They also covered the floor of both rooms with very thin sheets of gold.

³¹They made a set of doors from olive tree wood, and placed them at the entrance to the very holy place. The lintel and doorposts had five indented sections. ³²The doors were decorated by carving on them representations of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers. All of these things were covered with very thin sheets of gold. ³³They made a rectangular doorframe from olive tree wood, with four indented sections, and put it between the entrance room and the main room. ³⁴They made two folding doors from cypress wood and fastened them to the doorframe. ³⁵The doors were also decorated with wood carvings of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers, and they were also covered evenly with very thin sheets of gold.

³⁶They built a courtyard in front of the temple. The walls around the courtyard were made of cedar and stone. To make the walls, between each layer of cedar beams they put down two layers of stone.

³⁷They laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh in the month of Ziv, in the fourth year that Solomon ruled. ³⁸In the eleventh year that he ruled, in the month of Bul, they finished building the temple and all of its parts, doing exactly what Solomon's told them to do. It required seven years to build it.

Chapter 7

¹They also built a palace for Solomon, but it required thirteen years to build it. ²One of the buildings they built was a large ceremonial hall. It was called the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. It was forty-six meters long, twenty-three meters wide, and fourteen meters high. It was supported by four rows of cedar pillars. There were cedar beams across each row. ³The carpenters build a roof from cedar planks that were attached to beams. The carpenters made pillars to support the cedar beams. There were a total of forty-five pillars put in place, making fifteen pillars in each row to support the roof. ⁴On each of the two side walls there were three sets of windows facing each other. ⁵All the windows and doorways had rectangular frames. The windows along the long wall on one side faced the windows on the other side.

⁶They also built a long room with pillars; it was twenty-three meters long and fourteen meters wide. In front of it was a covered porch whose roof was supported by pillars.

⁷Then they made a building called the Hall of the Throne. It was also called the Hall of Justice. That was where Solomon decided about people's disputes. The entire floor was covered with cedar wood.

⁸In the courtyard behind the Hall of Judgment they built a house for Solomon to live in that was made like the other buildings. They also built the same kind of house for his wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt.

⁹All of these buildings and the walls around the palace courtyard were made from stones, from the foundations up to the eaves. The stones had been expensive for the workers to cut at the quarry, according to the sizes that were needed, and the sides of the stones were shaped and smoothed by cutting them with saws. ¹⁰The foundations were also made from huge blocks of expensive stones that had been prepared at the quarry. Some of them were about three and three-quarters meters long and others were about four and four-fifths meters long. ¹¹On top of the foundation stones were other expensive stones that had been cut according to the sizes they needed, as well as cedar beams. ¹²The palace courtyard, the inner courtyard in front of the temple, and the portico in front of the temple had walls made by putting down three layers of cut stones between each layer of cedar beams.

¹³⁻¹⁴There was a man who lived in the city of Tyre whose name was Hiram. He was a craftsman. His father had also lived in Tyre and had also been very skilled at making things from bronze, but Hiram's father was no longer living. His mother was from the tribe of Naphtali. Hiram was very wise and intelligent and was very skilled at making things from bronze. Solomon invited him to come to Jerusalem and supervise all the work of making things from bronze, and Hiram agreed.

¹⁵He made two bronze pillars. Each one was eight and one-third meters tall and eight and one-half around. ¹⁶He also made two gleaming bronze tops to be put on top of the pillars. Each top was two and one-third meters tall.

¹⁷Then he made bronze networks of chains like wreaths to decorate the top of each pillar. There were seven of these networks at the top of each pillar. ¹⁸Hiram also made bronze figures that resembled pomegranates. He put two rows of pomegranates over the top of each pillar. ¹⁹The top over each pillar was shaped like a lily. Each lily leaf was one and four-fifths meters tall. ²⁰These tops were placed on a bowl shaped section around which were two rows of two hundred figures of pomegranates around the top of each pillar. ²¹His helpers set up the pillars in front of the entrance of the temple. The pillar on the south side was named Jakin, and the pillar on the north side was named Boaz. ²²The bronze tops that were shaped like lilies were placed on top of the pillars.

So Hiram and his helpers completed the work of making the bronze pillars.

²³Hiram also made a very large round bronze basin called "The Sea" that was made of metal and cast in a clay mold. It was two and one-third meters tall, four and three-fifths meters across, and thirteen and three-quarters

meters around. ²⁴Around the outer edge of the rim of the "The Sea" were two rows of figures that resembled gourds that were made of bronze. But the gourds were not cast separately. They were cast in the same mold as the rest of the tank. For each meter of length around the rim of the tank there were about eighteen gourds.

²⁵Huram also cast twelve bronze statues of oxen. He placed them to face outward. He placed three of them to face north, three to face west, three to face south, and three to face east. His helpers put the large bronze tank known as "The Sea" so that it sat on the backs of the statues of the oxen. ²⁶The sides of the tank were eight centimeters thick. The rim was like the rim of a cup. It curved outward, like the petals of a lily. When the tank was full, it held about forty-four cubic meters of water.

²⁷Huram also made ten bronze carts. Each was one and four-fifths meters long, one and four-fifths meters wide, and one and one-third meters tall. ²⁸On the sides of the carts there were panels set in frames. ²⁹On those panels were bronze figures of lions, oxen, and winged creatures. Below and above the lions and bulls there were decorations of bronze wreaths. ³⁰Each cart had four bronze wheels and two axles made of bronze. At the top corners of each cart were bronze supports to hold up a basin. On these supports were also decorations of bronze wreaths. ³¹On top of each cart, under each basin, was a frame that resembled a circular collar. The top of each circular frame was forty-six centimeters above the top of the cart, and the bottom of it was twenty-three centimeters below the top of the cart. There were also engravings within square panels. ³²The wheels were sixty-nine centimeters high. They were below the panels. The wheels were connected to axles that had been cast in the same mold as the rest of the cart. ³³The wheels of the carts were like the wheels of chariots. The axles, the rims, the spokes, and the hubs were all cast from bronze.

³⁴At the top corners of each cart there were handles. These were molded into the cart itself. ³⁵There was a bronze band of twenty-three centimeters around the top of each cart. There were braces attached to the corners of each cart. The bands and the braces were cast in the same mold as the rest of the cart. ³⁶The braces and the panels on the sides of the carts were also decorated with figures of winged creatures, lions, and palm trees, whenever there was space for them, and there were bronze wreaths all around them. ³⁷That is how Hiram made the ten carts. They were all cast in the same mold, so they were all alike. They all were the same size and had the same shape.

³⁸Huram also made ten bronze basins, one basin for each of the ten stands. Each basin was one and four-fifths meters across and held 880 liters of water. ³⁹Huram placed five of the carts on the right side of the temple and five on the left side of the temple. He put the large tank known as "The Sea" on the corner that was toward the east and in the direction of the south. ⁴⁰Huram also made pots, shovels for carrying ashes, and bowls for carrying the blood of the animals that would be sacrificed. He completed all the work that King Solomon requested him to do for the temple. This is a list of the bronze things he made:

⁴¹the two pillars,

the two tops to be put on top of the pillars,

the two wreaths of chains to decorate the tops of the pillars,

⁴²the four hundred figures of pomegranates in four rows, with one hundred in each row; two of these rows were placed over the head of each pillar,

⁴³the ten carts,

the ten basins,

⁴⁴the big tank known as "The Sea,"

the twelve statues of oxen on whose backs the tank was placed,

⁴⁵the pots, shovels for the ashes of the altar, and bowls.

Huram and his workers made all these things for King Solomon and put them outside the temple. They were all made of bronze that the workmen polished for it to gleam brightly.

⁴⁶They made them by pouring melted bronze into the clay molds that Hiram had set up near the Jordan River valley, between the cities of Succoth and Zarethan.

⁴⁷Solomon did not tell his workers to weigh those bronze objects, because there were many items. So no one ever knew what they weighed.

⁴⁸Solomon's workers also made all the gold items for the temple of Yahweh:

the altar,

the table where the bread of the presence was kept before God,

⁴⁹the ten lampstands that were put in front of the very holy place, five on the south side and five on the north side,

the decorations that resembled flowers,

the lamps,

the tongs to grasp the hot coals,

⁵⁰the cups, the gold lamp wick snuffers, the small lamp bowls, the dishes for incense, the pans for carrying the hot coals, and the sockets for the doors at the entrance to the very holy place and for the doors at the entrance to the main room of the temple.

Those things were all made of gold.

⁵¹So Solomon's workers finished all the work for the temple. Then they placed in the temple storerooms all the things that his father David had dedicated to Yahweh—all the silver and gold, and the other valuable items.

Chapter 8

¹Solomon then summoned to Jerusalem all the elders of Israel, all the leaders of the tribes and the leaders of the clans. He arranged for them to join in bringing to the temple Yahweh's sacred chest from Mount Zion, where it was in the part of the city called the city of David. ²So all the Israelite leaders came to King Solomon during the Festival of Shelters, in the month of Ethanim.

³When they had all arrived, the priests lifted up the sacred chest ⁴and brought it to the temple. Then the descendants of Levi who assisted the priests helped them to carry to the temple the sacred tent and all the sacred things that had been in the tent. ⁵Then King Solomon and many of the Israelite people gathered in front of Yahweh's sacred chest. And they sacrificed a huge amount of sheep and oxen. No one was able to count the sacrifices because there were very many.

⁶Then the priests brought the sacred chest into the very holy place in the temple, and they placed it under the wings of the statues of the winged creatures. ⁷The wings of those statues spread out over the sacred chest and over the poles by which it was carried. ⁸The poles were very long, with the result that the ends of the poles could be seen by people who were standing at the entrance to the very holy place, but they could not be seen by people standing outside the temple. Those poles are still there. ⁹The only things that were in the sacred chest were the two stone tablets that Moses had put there at Mount Sinai, where Yahweh made a covenant with the people after they left Egypt.

¹⁰The priests put the sacred chest in the temple. When they came out of the holy place, suddenly it was filled with a cloud. ¹¹The glory of Yahweh filled the temple, with the result that the priests were not able to continue their work.

¹²Then Solomon prayed this:

“Yahweh, you have placed the sun in the sky,
but you have decided that you would live in very dark clouds.

¹³I have built for you a splendid temple,
a place for you to live in forever.”

¹⁴Then, while all the people stood there, the king turned around and faced them, and he asked God to bless them.

¹⁵He said, “Praise Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong! By his own power he has done what he promised to my father David. What he promised was this:

¹⁶From the time that I brought my people out of Egypt, I have never chosen any city in Israel in which a temple should be built for my people to worship me there. But I chose you, David, to rule my people.”

¹⁷Then Solomon said, “My father David wanted to build a temple in order that we Israelite people could worship Yahweh our God there. ¹⁸But Yahweh said to him, ‘You have wanted to build a temple for me, and what you wanted to do was good. ¹⁹However, you are not the one who I want to build it. It is one of your sons who I want to build a temple for me.’

²⁰And now Yahweh has done what he promised to do. I have become the king of Israel to succeed my father, and I am ruling my people, as Yahweh promised. I have arranged for this temple to be built for us Israelites to worship Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong. ²¹I have also provided a place in the temple for the sacred chest in which are the two stone tablets of the covenant that Yahweh made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt.”

²²Then Solomon stood in front of the altar which was in front of the Israelite people who had gathered there. He spread out his arms toward heaven, ²³and he prayed,

“Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, there is no god like you up in heaven or down here on the earth. You solemnly promised that you would faithfully love us. And that is what you have done for us who earnestly do what you want us to do.

²⁴You have done the things that you promised my father David, who served you very well, that you would do. Truly, you promised to do these things for him, and today we see that by your power you have done them.

²⁵So now, Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, I am requesting that you do the other things that you promised my father that you would do. You told him that there would always be some of his descendants who would be kings in Israel, if they would conduct their lives as he did. ²⁶So now, God of us Israelite people, cause what you promised to do for my father David, who served you well, to happen.

²⁷But God, will you really live on the earth among people? There is not enough space in heaven for you to have enough space to live there. So this temple that I have commanded my workers to build is certainly too small for you to live in. ²⁸But Yahweh, my God, please listen to me while I am praying to you this day. ²⁹I pray that you would protect this temple night and day. This is the place about which you have said, ‘I will always be there.’ I request that you listen to me whenever I turn my face toward this temple and pray. ³⁰I request that when I pray to you and your people pray to you while they turn their faces toward this place, that in your home in heaven you will hear us and forgive us for the sins that we have committed.

³¹Suppose that people accuse someone of doing something wrong to another person, and they bring him to your altar outside this holy temple. And suppose that he says, ‘I did not do that; may God punish me if I am not telling the truth.’ ³²In that case, listen from heaven and decide who is telling the truth. Then punish the person who is guilty as he deserves to be punished, and declare that the other person is innocent.

³³Or suppose that your Israelite people are defeated by their enemies in a battle because they have sinned against you. Suppose also that they are forced to go to some distant country. Then suppose that they stop acting in a sinful way. Suppose that they face in the direction of this temple and acknowledge you have justly punished them. And suppose that they plead that you will forgive them. ³⁴In that case, listen to them from heaven, forgive your Israelite people for the sins that they have committed, and bring them back to this land that you gave to our ancestors.

³⁵Or suppose that you do not allow any rain to fall because your people have sinned against you. Suppose that they face in the direction of this place and admit that you have justly punished them. Suppose also that they stop acting sinfully and humbly pray to you. ³⁶In that case, listen to them in heaven and forgive your Israelite people for the sins that they have committed. Teach them the right way to conduct their lives, and then send rain on this land that you have given to your people to belong to them permanently.

³⁷Suppose that the people of this land experience famine, or suppose that there is a plague by mildew or by locusts or grasshoppers. Or suppose that their enemies surround any of their cities in order to attack them. Suppose that any of those bad things happen to them. ³⁸And suppose that your Israelite people earnestly plead with you, because they know in their inner beings that they are suffering because they have sinned. Suppose that they stretch out their arms toward this temple and pray. ³⁹In that case, listen to them from your home in heaven, and forgive them, and help them. You are the only one who knows what people are thinking, so act toward each person as he needs, ⁴⁰in order that your people may then have an awesome respect for you all the years that they live in this land that you gave to our ancestors.

⁴¹⁻⁴²There will be some foreigners who do not belong to your Israelite people who will have come here from countries far away because they have heard that you are very great, and because they have heard about the great things that you have done for your people. Suppose that people like that come here to this temple to worship you and pray. ⁴³In that case, in your home in heaven listen to their prayer, and do for them what they request you to do. Do that in order that all the people groups in the world will know about you and revere you, as we your Israelite people do. Then they will know that this temple that I have caused to be built to honor you belongs to you and is where you should be worshiped.

⁴⁴Suppose that you send your people to go to fight against their enemies. And suppose that your people pray to you, wherever they are, and that they turn toward this city that you have chosen and toward this temple that I have caused to be built for you. ⁴⁵In that case, listen in heaven to their prayers. Listen to what they plead for you to do, and assist them.

⁴⁶It is true that everyone sins. So, suppose that your people sin against you and that you become angry with them. You might allow their enemies to defeat them, capture them, and take them away to their own countries, even to countries that are far away. ⁴⁷And suppose that, while your people are in those countries to which they had to go, they sincerely repent and plead with you there saying, 'We have sinned and have done things that are very wicked.'

⁴⁸Suppose that they very truly and sincerely repent while in the land of their enemies who captured them. And they turn toward this land that you gave to our ancestors. Suppose that they turn toward this city that you have chosen to be the place where we should worship you, and toward this temple that I have caused to be built for you.

Suppose that they then pray to you. ⁴⁹In that case, from your home in heaven listen to them while they plead for your help, and help them. ⁵⁰Forgive them for all the sins that they have committed against you and cause their enemies to act kindly toward them. ⁵¹Do not forget that the Israelites are your people. They are your special possession. You brought our ancestors out of Egypt where they were greatly suffering as though they were in a blazing furnace.

⁵²I request that you always listen to your Israelite people and to their king, and heed their prayers whenever they call out to you to help them. ⁵³You chose them from all the other people groups in the world to belong to you, which is what you told Moses to tell them when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt."

⁵⁴After Solomon had finished praying this and pleading to Yahweh for his help, he stood up in front of the altar where he had been kneeling. He lifted up his arms. ⁵⁵Then he asked God to bless all the Israelite people. He prayed loudly, saying,

⁵⁶"Praise Yahweh, who has given us his people peace, like he promised that he would do. He has done every one of the good things that he promised to Moses, the man who served him very well. ⁵⁷I pray that our God will be with us like he was with our ancestors, and that he will never, never abandon us. ⁵⁸I pray that he will cause us to loyally serve him, to conduct our lives as he wants us to, and to obey all his commandments and statutes and decrees that he gave to our ancestors. ⁵⁹I pray that Yahweh our God will never forget these words that I have prayed, pleading for his help. I pray that he will think about them by day and by night. I pray that he will always act mercifully toward us Israelite people and toward our king, giving us the things that we need day by day. ⁶⁰If you do that, all the people groups in the world will know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is God, and that there is no other one who is God. ⁶¹I pray that you, his people, will always be fully committed to Yahweh, and that you will obey all his statutes and commands, like you are doing now."

⁶²Then the king and all the Israelite people who were there offered sacrifices to Yahweh. ⁶³They sacrificed twenty-two thousand cattle and 120,000 sheep to restore fellowship with Yahweh. Then the king and all the people dedicated the temple.

⁶⁴On that day, the king also dedicated the middle part of the courtyard that was in front of the temple. Then he offered there sacrifices that would be completely burned on the altar, the offerings of flour and the fat of the animals that were sacrificed to restore fellowship with Yahweh. They sacrificed them there because the bronze altar was not big enough for all those sacrifices to be burned on it that day.

⁶⁵Then Solomon and all the Israelite people celebrated the Festival of Shelters for seven days and then for another seven days, before the Lord, for a total of fourteen days. There was a huge crowd of people there, some of whom had come from distant places like Hamath in the far north and the border of Egypt in the far south. ⁶⁶On the final day, Solomon sent the people to their homes. They all praised him and went home happy because of all the things that Yahweh had done to bless David and his Israelite people.

Chapter 9

¹After Solomon's workers had finished building the temple and his palace and everything else that Solomon wanted them to build, ²Yahweh appeared to him in a dream a second time, like he had appeared to him at the city of Gibeon. ³Yahweh said to him,

"I heard what you prayed and what you pleaded for me to do. I have set this house apart for myself, for me to be present in it forever.

⁴And as for you, if you conduct your life as I want you to, like your father David did, and if you very sincerely obey all the statutes and decrees that I have commanded you to obey, ⁵I will do what I promised your father that I would do. I promised him that Israel would always be ruled by his descendants.

⁶But suppose that you or your descendants stop worshiping me; suppose that you disobey the commands and decrees that I have given to you; suppose that you start to worship other gods. ⁷Then I will remove my Israelite people from the land that I have given to them. I will also abandon this temple that I have dedicated. Then people everywhere will despise Israel and make fun of it. ⁸Despite the fact that this temple is very beautiful, there will come a time when everyone who passes by will be astonished when they see it, and they will hiss and say, 'Why has Yahweh done this to this land and to this temple?' ⁹Other people will reply, 'It happened because the Israelite people abandoned Yahweh their God, the one who brought their ancestors out of Egypt. They started to accept and worship other gods. And that is why Yahweh has caused them to experience all these disasters.'"

¹⁰Solomon's workers worked for twenty years to build the temple and the palace. ¹¹Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, had arranged for his workers to give Solomon all the cedar and pine logs and all the gold that he needed for this work. After it was all finished, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the region of Galilee. ¹²But when Hiram went from Tyre to Galilee to see the cities that Solomon had given to him, he was not pleased with them.

¹³He said to Solomon, "My friend, those cities that you gave me are worthless." Because of that, Hiram called that region Worthless. ¹⁴Hiram gave Solomon only 4,000 kilograms of gold for those cities.

¹⁵This is a record of the work that King Solomon forced men to do. He forced them to build the temple and his palace and the landfill on the east side of the city, and the wall around Jerusalem, and to rebuild the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. ¹⁶The reason they needed to rebuild Gezer was that the army of the king of Egypt had attacked Gezer and captured it. Then they had burned the houses in the city and killed all the people of the Canaan people group who lived there. The king of Egypt gave that city to his daughter for a gift when she married Solomon. ¹⁷So Solomon's workers also rebuilt the city of Gezer, and they also rebuilt the city of Lower Beth Horon. ¹⁸They also rebuilt the cities of Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness in the southern part of Judah. ¹⁹They also built the cities where they kept the supplies for Solomon, the places where his horses and chariots were kept. They also built everything else that he wanted them to build, in Jerusalem and in Lebanon, and in other places in the area over which he ruled.

²⁰There were many people groups who belonged to the Amor, the Heth, the Periz, the Hiv, and the Jebus, who were not killed when the Israelites captured their land. ²¹Their descendants still lived in Israel. It was those people whom Solomon forced to become his slaves to build all those places, and they are still slaves. ²²But Solomon did not force any Israelite people to become slaves. Some of them became soldiers, servants, officials, army officers, commanders of his chariot forces, and men who rode on his horses. ²³There were 550 officials who supervised the slaves who worked to build all those places.

²⁴After Solomon's wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt, moved from the part of Jerusalem called the city of David to the palace that Solomon's workers built for her, Solomon told his workers to fill in the land on the east side of the city.

²⁵Three times each year Solomon brought to the temple offerings that the priests burned completely on the altar and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. He also brought incense to be burned in the presence of Yahweh. And that is how his men finished building the temple.

²⁶King Solomon's workers also built a fleet of ships at the city of Ezion Geber, which is near the city of Elath, on the shore of the Sea of Reeds, in the land belonging to the Edom people group. ²⁷King Hiram sent some expert sailors to go on the ships with Solomon's workers. ²⁸They sailed to the region of Ophir and brought back to Solomon about fourteen metric tons of gold.

Chapter 10

¹The queen who ruled the land of Sheba heard that Yahweh had caused Solomon to become famous, so she traveled to Jerusalem to ask him questions that were difficult to answer. ²She came with a large group of wealthy people, and she brought camels that were loaded with spices, precious gems, and much gold. When she met Solomon, she asked him questions about all the things in which she was interested. ³Solomon answered all her questions. He explained everything that she asked about, even things that were very difficult. ⁴The queen realized that Solomon was very wise. She saw his palace, ⁵she saw the food that was served on his table every day, she saw where his officials lived, their uniforms, the servants who served the food and wine, and the sacrifices that he took to the temple to be offered. She was extremely amazed.

⁶She said to the king, "Everything that I heard in my own country about you and about how wise you are is true!

⁷But I did not believe it was true until I came here and saw it myself. But really, what they told me is only half of what they could have told me about you. You are extremely wise and rich, more than what people told me. ⁸How fortunate are your wives! And how fortunate are your servants, who are waiting to serve you, who are listening to the wise things that you say! ⁹Praise Yahweh, your God, who has shown that he is pleased with you by causing you

to become the king of Israel! God has always loved the Israelite people, and therefore he has appointed you to be their king, in order that you will rule them fairly and righteously.”

¹⁰Then the queen gave to the king the things that she had brought. She gave him over 4,000 kilograms of gold and a large amount of spices and gems. Never again did King Solomon receive more spices than the queen gave him at that time.

¹¹In the ships that belong to King Hiram, in which they had previously brought gold from Ophir, they also brought a large amount of almug wood and precious gem stones. ¹²King Solomon told his workers to use that wood to make pillars in the temple and in his palace, and also to make harps and lyres for the musicians. That wood was the largest amount of fine wood that had ever been brought to or seen in Israel.

¹³King Solomon gave to the queen from Sheba everything that she wanted. He gave her those gifts in addition to the gifts that he always gave to other rulers who visited him. Then she and the people who came with her returned to her own land.

¹⁴Each year there was brought to Solomon a total of twenty-two metric tons of gold. ¹⁵That was in addition to the taxes paid to him by the merchants and traders, and the annual taxes paid by the kings of Arabia and by the governors of the districts in Israel.

¹⁶King Solomon's workers took this gold and hammered it into thin sheets and covered two hundred large shields with those thin sheets of gold. They put six and one-half kilograms of gold on each shield. ¹⁷His workers made three hundred smaller shields. They covered each of them with one and three-quarters kilograms of gold. Then the king put those shields in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁸His workers also made for him a large throne. Part of it was covered with ivory, and part of it was covered with very fine gold. ¹⁹⁻²⁰There were six steps in front of the throne. There was a statue of a lion on both sides of each step. So altogether there were twelve statues of lions. The back of the throne was rounded at the top. At each side of the throne there was an armrest and alongside each armrest there was a small statue of a lion. No throne like that had ever existed in any other kingdom. ²¹All of Solomon's cups were made of gold, and all the various dishes in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were made of gold. They did not make things from silver, because during the years that Solomon ruled silver was not considered to be valuable. ²²The king had a fleet of ships that sailed with the ships that King Hiram owned. Every three years the ships returned from the places to which they had sailed bringing gold, silver, ivory, monkeys, and baboons.

²³King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king. ²⁴People from all over the world wanted to come and listen to the wise things that Solomon said, things that God had put into his mind. ²⁵All the people who came to him brought presents. They brought things made from silver or gold, or robes, or weapons, or spices, or horses, or mules. The people continued to do this every year.

²⁶Solomon acquired 1,400 chariots and twelve thousand men who rode on the horses. Solomon put some of them in Jerusalem and some of them in other cities where he kept his chariots. ²⁷During the years that Solomon was king, silver became as common in Jerusalem as stones, and lumber from cedar trees in the foothills of Judah were as plentiful as lumber from fig trees. ²⁸Solomon's agents bought horses and supervised the bringing of them into Israel from the areas of Egypt and Kue that were famous for breeding horses. ²⁹In Egypt they bought chariots and horses. They paid six and one-half kilograms of silver for each chariot and one and three-fifths kilograms of silver for each horse. They brought them to Israel. Then they sold many of them to the kings of the Hittite people group and the kings of Aram.

Chapter 11

¹King Solomon married many foreign women. First he married the daughter of the king of Egypt. He also married women from the Heth people group and from the Moab, Ammon, and Edom people groups, and from the city of

Sidon. ²He married them even though Yahweh had commanded the Israelite people saying, "Do not marry people from those areas, because if you do that, they will surely persuade you to worship the gods that they worship!"

³Solomon married seven hundred women who were kings' daughters. He also had three hundred wives who were his slaves. And his wives caused him to stop worshiping God. ⁴By the time that Solomon became old, they had persuaded him to worship the gods from their countries. He was not completely dedicated to Yahweh his God like his father David had been. ⁵Solomon worshiped Asherah, the goddess that the people of Sidon worshiped, and he worshiped Molech, the disgusting god that the Ammon people group worshiped. ⁶Thus Solomon did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not conduct his life as his father David had done; he did not conduct his life as Yahweh wanted him to.

⁷On the hill to the east of Jerusalem he built a place to worship Chemosh, the disgusting god that the Moab people group worshiped, and a place to worship Molech, the disgusting god that the Ammon people group worshiped.

⁸He also built places where all his foreign wives could burn incense and offer sacrifices to the gods from their own countries.

⁹⁻¹⁰Even though Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped, had appeared to Solomon two times, and had commanded him to not worship foreign gods, Solomon refused to obey Yahweh. So Yahweh was angry with Solomon. ¹¹Yahweh said to him, "You have chosen to disobey the covenant that I made with you and to disobey what I commanded you. So I am certainly not going to allow you to rule all of your kingdom. I am going to allow one of your officials to rule. ¹²But because of what I promised your father David, I will allow you to rule all your kingdom while you are still living. After you die, I will not allow your son to rule the whole kingdom. ¹³But I will not stop him from ruling some of the kingdom. I will allow him to rule one tribe, because of what I promised to David, who served me well, and because I want David's descendants to rule in Jerusalem, where my temple is located."

¹⁴Yahweh caused Hadad, from the family of the kings in the Edom people group, to rebel against Solomon.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶What happened was that previously, when David's army had conquered Edom, his army commander Joab had gone there to help bury the Israelite soldiers who had been killed in the battle. Joab and his army remained in Edom for six months, and during that time they killed all the males of that area. ¹⁷Hadad was a young child at that time, and he had escaped to Egypt, along with some of his father's servants from Edom. ¹⁸They went to the region of Midian, and then they went to the desert area at Paran. Some other men joined them there. Then they all traveled to Egypt and went to the king of Egypt. The king gave Hadad some land and ordered his servants to give him some food regularly. ¹⁹The king liked Hadad. As a result he gave him the sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, to be Hadad's wife.

²⁰Later Hadad's wife gave birth to a son named Genubath. The sister of Tahpenes raised him in the palace, where he lived with the king's sons.

²¹While Hadad was in Egypt, he heard that David had died, and that Joab, the commander of David's army, was also dead. So he said to the king of Egypt, "Please allow me to return to my own country."

²²But the king said to him, "Why do you want to go back to your country? Is there something that you lack that you want me to give to you?" Hadad replied, "No, but please just allow me to go." So the king allowed him to leave, and he returned to his own country and became the king of Edom.

²³God also caused another man named Rezon son of Eliada, to rebel against Solomon. Rezon had run away from his master, King Hadadezer of the area of Zobah, north of Damascus. ²⁴Rezon then became the leader of a group of outlaws. That happened after David's army had defeated Hadadezer and had also killed all his soldiers. Rezon and his men went to Damascus and started to live there, and the people there appointed him to be their king. ²⁵All during the time that Solomon was alive, while Rezon was ruling not only Damascus but all of Aram, he was an enemy of Israel and caused trouble for Israel like Hadad did.

²⁶Another man who rebelled against Solomon was one of his officials named Jeroboam son of Nebat. He was from the city of Zeredah in the region where the tribe of Ephraim lives. His mother was a widow named Zeruah.

²⁷This is what happened. Solomon's workers were filling in the land on the east side of Jerusalem and repairing the walls around the city. ²⁸Jeroboam was a very capable young man. So, when Solomon saw that he worked very hard, he appointed him to supervise all the men who were forced to work in the areas where the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim live.

²⁹One day when Jeroboam was walking alone along the road outside of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from the city of Shiloh met him. Ahijah was wearing a new robe, ³⁰which he took off and tore into twelve pieces. ³¹He said to Jeroboam, "Take ten of these pieces for yourself, because Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you, 'I am going to tear the kingdom from Solomon, and I am going to enable you to become the ruler of ten of the tribes of Israel.' ³²Solomon's descendants will still rule one tribe, because of what I promised David, a man who served me very well, and because of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen from all the cities in Israel to be the city where my people will worship me. ³³I am going to do this because Solomon has rejected me and has been worshipping Asherah, the goddess that the people of Sidon worship, Chemosh, the god that the Moab people group worships, and Molech, the god that the Ammon people group worships. He has not conducted his life as I wanted him to. He has not obeyed my statutes and decrees, as his father David did.

³⁴But I will not take the entire kingdom away from him. I will enable him to rule Judah all during the years that he is alive. I will do that because of what I promised to do for David, whom I chose to be the king, and who served me well, and who always obeyed my commandments and laws. ³⁵But I will take the other ten tribes of his kingdom and give them to you to rule. ³⁶I will allow Solomon's son to rule one tribe, in order that descendants of David will always rule in Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen to be the place where my people worship me. ³⁷I will enable you to become the king of Israel, and you will rule over all the territory that you want to. ³⁸If you obey all that I command you to do, and conduct your life as I want you to, and if you do what I say is right by obeying my laws and commandments like David did, I will help you. I will make sure that your descendants will rule after you die, like I promised to do for David. ³⁹Because of Solomon's sins, I will punish David's descendants, but I will not continue to punish them forever."

⁴⁰Solomon found out what Ahijah told Jeroboam, so he tried to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam escaped and went to Egypt. He went to Shishak, the king of Egypt, and stayed with him until after Solomon died.

⁴¹A record of all the other things that Solomon did, and all the wise things that he said, was written in the book of the events of Solomon. ⁴²He was king in Jerusalem and ruled over all of Israel for forty years. ⁴³Then Solomon died and was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Rehoboam became the king.

Chapter 12

¹All the people of northern Israel went to the city of Shechem in order to appoint Rehoboam to be their king. So Rehoboam also went there. ²When Jeroboam, who was still in Egypt, heard about that, he returned from Egypt to Israel. ³The leaders of the northern tribes summoned him, and they went together to talk to Rehoboam. They said to him, ⁴"Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard, and if you allow us to work less, we will serve you faithfully."

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

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

⁷They replied, "If you want to serve these people well, speak kindly to them when you reply to them. If you do that, they will always serve you faithfully."

⁸But he ignored what the older men advised him to do. Instead, he consulted the younger men who had grown up with him, who were now his advisors. ⁹He said to them, "What do you say that I should answer the men who are asking me to reduce the work that my father required from them?"

¹⁰They replied, "This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. ¹¹What I mean is that my father required you to work hard. But I will make those loads heavier. It was as though my father whipped you, but I will whip you with scorpions.'"

¹²So three days later, Jeroboam and all the leaders came to Rehoboam again, which is what he had told them to do.

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

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

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

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

You people of Israel, let us go home!

As for this descendant of David, he can rule his own tribe!"

So the Israelite leaders returned to their homes. ¹⁷And after that, the only Israelite people whom Rehoboam ruled over were those who lived in the territory of the tribe of Judah.

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

²⁰When the Israelite people heard that Jeroboam had returned from Egypt, they invited him to come to a meeting, and there they appointed him to be the king of Israel. Only the people of the tribe of Judah continued to be loyal to the kings descended from King David.

²¹When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he gathered 180,000 of the best soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He wanted them to fight against the northern tribes of Israel and defeat them, in order that he could rule all the tribes of his kingdom again.

²²But God spoke to the prophet Shemaiah and said this to him: ²³"Go and tell this to Solomon's son Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and to all the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the people from the northern tribe who live in Judah: ²⁴"Yahweh says that you must not go to fight against your own relatives, the people of Israel. All of you must go home. What has happened is what Yahweh wanted to happen.'" So Shemaiah went and told that to them, and they all listened what Yahweh had commanded them to do, and they went home.

²⁵Then Jeroboam's workers built walls around the city of Shechem in the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and he ruled from there for a while. He and his workers then left there and went to the city of Peniel, and they built walls around that city.

²⁶⁻²⁷Then Jeroboam said to himself, "If my people continue to go to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices to Yahweh at the temple there, soon they will again become loyal to Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and they will kill me."

²⁸So he consulted his advisors, and then he did what they suggested. He told his workers to make gold statues of two calves. Then he said to the people, "You have been going to Jerusalem to worship for a long time. You are making too big an effort to keep going there. You people of Israel, look! These statues are the gods that brought

our ancestors up from Egypt! So you can worship these, here!" ²⁹He told his workers to place one of the statues in the city of Bethel in the south and one in the city of Dan in the north. ³⁰So what Jeroboam did caused the people to sin. Some of them went and worshiped the calf at Bethel, and others went and worshiped the other calf at Dan.

³¹Moses had declared that only men from the tribe of Levi would be priests, but Jeroboam also told his workers to build places on the hills where they could worship idols, and then he appointed men who were not from the tribe of Levi to be priests for the idols. ³²They had a celebration in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day, like the celebration of living in temporary shelters that occurred in Judah each year. On the altar that they built at Bethel, he offered sacrifices to the gold statues of calves that they had made, and he stationed the priests on the hills where idols were worshiped, where his workers built houses used for idolatry. ³³Jeroboam went up to that altar on that day in the eighth month that he himself had chosen. There on that altar he burned incense to be a sacrifice. And he declared that the people should celebrate that festival on that same day every year.

Chapter 13

¹One day a prophet, obeying what Yahweh commanded him to do, went from Judah north to Bethel. He arrived there right at the time that Jeroboam was standing at the altar, ready to burn incense. ²Saying what Yahweh told him to say, the prophet shouted, "This is what Yahweh says about this altar, 'I want you to know that some day a descendant of King David will be born. His name will be Josiah, and he will come here. He will slaughter at this altar the priests who are burning incense for sacrifices on the hills in this area, and he will burn the bones of dead people on this altar.'" ³Then the prophet also said, "This is what will prove to you that Yahweh has said this: This altar will be split apart, and the ashes that are on it will be scattered."

⁴When King Jeroboam heard what the prophet said about the altar at Bethel, he pointed his finger at him and said to his servants, "Seize that man!" But immediately the king's arm became paralyzed, with the result that he could not move it. ⁵(The altar split apart, and the ashes spilled out on the ground, which is what the prophet said that Yahweh had predicted would happen.)

⁶Then the king said to the prophet, "Please pray that Yahweh will be merciful to me and heal my arm!" So the prophet prayed, and Yahweh completely healed the king's arm.

⁷Then the king said to the prophet, "Come home with me and eat some food. And I will also give you a reward for what you have done!"

⁸But the prophet replied, "Even if you would promise to give me half of everything that you own, I will not go with you, and I will not eat or drink anything with you here, ⁹because Yahweh commanded me not to eat or drink anything here. He also commanded me not to return home on the road on which I came here." ¹⁰So he started to return home, but he did not go on the road on which he came to Bethel. He went on a different road.

¹¹At that time there was an old man living in Bethel who was also a prophet. His sons came and told him what the prophet from Judah had done there on that day, and they also told him what the prophet had said to the king.

¹²Their father said, "On which road did he go?" So his sons showed him the road on which the prophet from Judah had gone when he left Bethel. ¹³Then he said to his sons, "Put a saddle on my donkey." So they did that, and he got on the donkey. ¹⁴He went along the road to find the prophet from Judah. He found him sitting under an oak tree. He said to him, "Are you the prophet who came from Judah?" He replied, "Yes, I am."

¹⁵The old prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat some food."

¹⁶He replied, "No, I am not allowed to go with you into your house, or to eat or drink anything with you, ¹⁷because Yahweh told me, 'Do not eat or drink anything here, and do not return home on the road on which you came.'"

¹⁸Then the old prophet said to him, "I also am a prophet, like you are. Yahweh sent an angel to tell me that I should take you home with me and give you some food and drink." But the old man was lying when he said that. ¹⁹But

because of what the old prophet said, the prophet from Judah returned with him to his home and ate some food and drank some water with him.

²⁰While they were sitting at the table, Yahweh spoke to the old man. ²¹Then he cried out to the prophet from Judah, "This is what Yahweh says: 'You have disobeyed him, and you have not done what he commanded you to do. ²²Instead, you have come back here and had things to eat and drink in a place where he commanded you not to do that. As a result, you will be killed, and your body will not be buried in the grave where your ancestors are buried.'"

²³When they had finished eating, the old man put a saddle on the donkey for the prophet from Judah, and the prophet from Judah left. ²⁴But as he was going, a lion met him and killed him. The prophet's corpse was lying on the road; the donkey was standing beside it, and the lion was also standing beside the corpse. ²⁵Some men passed by and were surprised to see the corpse on the road and the lion standing next to the corpse. So they went into Bethel and reported what they had seen.

²⁶When the old man who had brought the prophet from Judah to his home heard about it, he said, "That is the prophet who disobeyed what Yahweh told him to do! That is why Yahweh allowed the lion to attack him and kill him. That is what Yahweh said would happen!"

²⁷Then he said to his sons, "Put a saddle on my donkey." So they did that. ²⁸Then he rode on the donkey and found the prophet's corpse on the road, and his donkey and the lion were still standing there alongside the corpse. But the lion had not eaten any of the flesh of the prophet and had not attacked the donkey. ²⁹The old man picked up the corpse of the prophet and put it on his donkey and brought it back to Bethel, in order to mourn for him and to bury his corpse. ³⁰He buried the prophet's corpse in the grave where other people in his family had been buried. Then he and his sons mourned about him, saying, "We are very sorry, my brother!"

³¹After they had buried him, the old man said to his sons, "When I die, bury my corpse in the grave where we buried the prophet from Judah. Lay my corpse next to his corpse. ³²And do not forget what he said, things that Yahweh told him to say about the altar in Bethel, and what Yahweh told him to say about the places where they worshiped idols on the hills around the towns in Samaria. Those things will surely happen."

³³But King Jeroboam still did not stop continuing to do the evil things that he was doing. Instead, he appointed more priests from men who were not descended from Levi. He appointed as priest anyone who agreed to become one, in order that he could offer sacrifices on the hilltops. ³⁴Because he committed that sin, a few years later God got rid of most of Jeroboam's descendants and did not allow them to become kings of Israel.

Chapter 14

¹At that time, Jeroboam's son Abijah became very sick. ²Jeroboam said to his wife, "Disguise yourself in order that no one will recognize that you are my wife. Then go to the city of Shiloh, where the prophet Ahijah lives. He is the one who predicted that I would become the king of Israel. ³Take with you ten loaves of bread and some small flat cakes, and a jar of honey, and give them to him. Tell him about our son, and he will tell you what will happen to him." ⁴So his wife went to Shiloh, to Ahijah's house. Ahijah was unable to see, because he was very old and had become blind.

⁵But before she got there, Yahweh told Ahijah that Jeroboam's wife was coming to inquire about their son, who was very sick. And Yahweh told Ahijah what he should tell her.

When she came to him, she pretended to be another woman. ⁶But when Ahijah heard her footsteps as she entered the doorway, he said to her, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why do you pretend that you are someone else? Yahweh has given me bad news to tell you. ⁷Go and tell Jeroboam that this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you: 'I chose you from among the common people and enabled you to become the king of my Israelite people. ⁸I took most of the kingdom of Israel away from David's descendants and gave it to you. But you have not been like David, who served me very well. He obeyed all my commandments very sincerely, doing only

things that I considered to be right. ⁹But you have done more evil things than all those who ruled before you. You have rejected me, and you have caused me to become very angry by making metal images of other gods so that you and others could worship them.

¹⁰So, I am going to cause terrible things to happen to your family. I will cause all your male descendants to die, young ones and old ones. I will completely get rid of your family just like a man completely burns dung to cook his food. ¹¹The corpses of any members of your family who die in cities will be eaten by dogs. And the corpses of any members of your family who die out in the open fields will be eaten by vultures. This will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said that it will happen.'

¹²So go back home. And as soon as you enter the city, your son will die. ¹³All the Israelite people will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one of Jeroboam's family who will be buried properly, because he is the only one of Jeroboam's family with whom Yahweh is at all pleased.

¹⁴Furthermore, Yahweh will appoint for himself a king to rule over Israel who will get rid of Jeroboam's descendants. And that will start to happen today! ¹⁵Yahweh will punish the people of Israel. He will shake them like the wind shakes the reeds that grow in a stream. He will expel the Israelite people from this good land that he gave to our ancestors. He will scatter them into countries east of the Euphrates River, because they have caused him to become very angry by worshiping statues of the goddess Asherah. ¹⁶Yahweh will abandon the Israelite people because of the sins that Jeroboam committed, sins which induced the Israelite people to commit them."

¹⁷Jeroboam's wife returned home to the city of Tirzah, the new capital of Israel. And just as she entered her house, her son died. ¹⁸All the Israelite people mourned for him and buried him, which is what Yahweh had told his servant, the prophet Ahijah, would happen.

¹⁹Everything else that Jeroboam did, and the record of wars that his army fought, and how he ruled, is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ²⁰Jeroboam ruled for twenty-two years. Then he died, and his son Nadab became king.

²¹Solomon's son Rehoboam ruled Judah. He was forty-one years old when he started to rule, and he ruled for seventeen years. He ruled in Jerusalem, which is the city that Yahweh chose out of all the tribes of Israel to be the place where he should be worshiped. Rehoboam's mother's name was Naamah. She was from the Ammon people group.

²²The people of Judah did many things that Yahweh said were evil. They caused him to become angry because they committed more sins than their ancestors had committed. They worshiped many other gods instead of worshiping only Yahweh. ²³They built places to worship those gods. On high hills and under big trees they set up pillars and poles for worshiping Asherah. ²⁴Also, there were male prostitutes at these places of worship. The Israelite people did the same disgraceful things that had been done by the people whom Yahweh had expelled while the Israelites were advancing through the land.

²⁵When Rehoboam had been ruling for almost five years, King Shishak of Egypt came with his army to attack Jerusalem. ²⁶They took away all the valuable things in the temple and in the king's palace, including the gold shields that Solomon's workers had made. ²⁷King Rehoboam's workers made bronze shields to replace them and put them into the hands of officers who guarded the entrance to the king's palace. ²⁸Every time that the king went into the temple, those guards carried those shields, and when he left the temple they returned the shields to the storeroom.

²⁹Everything else that Rehoboam did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ³⁰There were wars continually between the armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. ³¹Then Rehoboam died, and he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors were buried. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite woman. Then his son Abijah became the king.

Chapter 15

¹After Jeroboam had been the king of Israel for almost eighteen years, Abijah became the king of Judah. ²He ruled for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah, the daughter of Abishalom.

³Abijah committed the same kind of sins that his father had committed. He was not fully dedicated to Yahweh his God, as his ancestor David had been. ⁴But, because of what Yahweh his God had promised to David, Yahweh gave Abijah a son to rule in Jerusalem after him, and in order to protect Jerusalem from their enemies. ⁵Yahweh did that because David had always done what pleased Yahweh and because David had always obeyed Yahweh. The only time when he disobeyed Yahweh was when he caused Uriah to be killed due to his sin with Bathsheba.

⁶There were wars between the armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam all during the time that Abijah ruled.

⁷Everything else that Abijah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. ⁸Abijah died and was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, and his son Asa became king.

⁹After Jeroboam had been the king of Israel for almost twenty years, Asa started to rule Judah. ¹⁰He ruled in Jerusalem for forty-one years. His grandmother was Maacah, the daughter of Abishalom.

¹¹Asa did what was pleasing to Yahweh, as his ancestor David had done. ¹²He got rid of the male prostitutes who were at the places where the people worshiped idols, and he also got rid of all the idols that his ancestors had made. ¹³He also removed his grandmother Maacah so that she no longer had influence in the government because of being the mother of a previous king. He did that because she had made a disgusting wooden statue of the goddess Asherah. Asa told his workers to cut down the statue and burned it in the Kidron Valley. ¹⁴He was not able to destroy all the places where the people worshiped Yahweh, but he continued to be dedicated to Yahweh all during the time that he lived. ¹⁵He told his workers to place in the temple all the items that his father had dedicated to God, and all the gold and silver things that he had dedicated to God.

¹⁶There were wars between the armies of Asa and Baasha, the king of Israel, all during the time that they ruled.

¹⁷Baasha's army invaded Judah. They captured the city of Ramah north of Jerusalem. Then they started to build a wall around it in order to prevent people from entering or leaving the area in Judah that King Asa ruled.

¹⁸So Asa told his workers to take all the silver and gold that was still in the storerooms in the temple and in the palace and gave it to some of his officials. He told them to take it to Damascus and give it to King Ben Hadad who ruled Aram. Ben Hadad was son of Tabrimmon and grandson of Hezion. He told the officials to say this to Ben Hadad: ¹⁹"I want there to be a peace treaty between me and you, like there was between my father and your father. For that purpose, I am giving you this silver and gold. So now please cancel the treaty that you made with Baasha, the king of Israel, in order that he will take his soldiers away from attacking mine, because he will be afraid of your army." ²⁰So the officials went and gave the message to Ben Hadad, and he did what Asa suggested. He sent his army commanders and their soldiers to attack some of the towns in Israel. They captured Ijon, Dan, Abel of Beth Maacah, the area near the Sea of Galilee, and all the land of the tribe of Naphtali. ²¹When Baasha heard about that, he told his soldiers to stop working at Ramah. He and his soldiers returned to Tirzah and stayed there. ²²Then King Asa sent a message to all the people in the towns in Judah, stating that they all were required to go to Ramah and carry away the stones and timber that Baasha's soldiers had been using to build a wall around the city. With those stones and timber they fortified the city of Mizpah north of Jerusalem, and Geba, a town in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

²³Everything else that Asa did, the armies that his soldiers defeated, and the names of the cities that he caused to be fortified, are all written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. But when Asa became old, he got a disease in his feet. ²⁴He died and was buried where his ancestors were buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Jehoshaphat became king.

²⁵After Asa had been the king of Judah for almost two years, King Jeroboam's son Nadab started to rule Israel. He ruled for two years. ²⁶He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. His behavior was sinful like his father's behavior had been, and what he did induced the people of Israel to sin.

²⁷A man named Baasha, from the tribe of Issachar, planned to harm him. He killed Nadab when Nadab and his army had surrounded the city of Gibbethon in the region of Philistia. ²⁸That was when Asa had been the king ruling Judah for almost three years. Then Baasha became the king of Israel.

²⁹As soon as he became king, he commanded his soldiers to kill all of Jeroboam's family. Doing what Yahweh had told the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh would happen, they killed all of Jeroboam's family. None of them were left.

³⁰That happened because Yahweh had become very angry with Jeroboam because of all the sins that Jeroboam had committed, and because of the sins that he had persuaded the people of Israel to commit.

³¹Everything else that Nadab did is written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ³²There were wars between the armies of King Asa and King Baasha all the time that they ruled.

³³After Asa had been the king of Judah for almost three years, Baasha son of Ahijah, started to rule Israel at the city of Tirzah. He ruled for twenty-four years. ³⁴Baasha did many things that Yahweh said were evil, and he lived a sinful life just like Jeroboam lived. Baasha's sinful life set an example for the people of Israel that encouraged them to commit sins that were like his sins.

Chapter 16

¹During the time that Baasha was king of Israel, the prophet Jehu, Hanani's son, gave Baasha this message that he had received from Yahweh: ²"You were very insignificant when I caused you to become the ruler of my Israelite people. But you have caused me to become very angry by doing the kinds of evil things that King Jeroboam did. You have also caused me to become angry by causing my people to sin. ³So now I will get rid of you and your family. I will do to you just like I did to Jeroboam and his family. ⁴The bodies of those in your family who die in this city will not be buried. They will be eaten by dogs, and the bodies of those who die in the fields will be eaten by vultures."

⁵The other things that Baasha did during the time that he ruled Israel, and the great things that his army did, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ⁶When Baasha died, he was buried in Tirzah, the capital city. Then his son Elah became king.

⁷Yahweh gave that message about Baasha and his family to the prophet Jehu. Baasha had done many deeds that Yahweh said were evil, which caused Yahweh to become angry. Baasha did the same kind of deeds that King Jeroboam and his family had done previously. Yahweh was also angry with Baasha because he had killed all of Jeroboam's family.

⁸After Asa had been the king of Judah for almost twenty-six years, Elah became the king of Israel. Elah ruled in Tirzah for only two years.

⁹A man named Zimri was one of Elah's army officers. He commanded the drivers of half of Elah's army's chariots. He made plans to kill Elah while Elah was in Tirzah, getting drunk at the house of a man named Arza. Arza was the man who took care of the things in the king's palace. ¹⁰Zimri went into Arza's house and killed Elah. Then he became the king of Israel. That was when Asa had been the king of Judah for twenty-seven years.

¹¹As soon as Zimri became king, he killed all of Baasha's family. He killed every male in Baasha's family and all of Baasha's male friends. ¹²So he got rid of all of Baasha's family. That was just what Yahweh told the prophet Jehu would happen. ¹³Baasha and his son Elah had sinned and induced the Israelite people to sin. They caused Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped, to become angry, because they both urged the people to worship worthless idols.

¹⁴Everything else that Elah did is written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁵So Zimri became the king of Israel after Asa had been king of Judah for twenty-seven years. But Zimri ruled in Tirzah for only seven days. The Israelite army was besieging Gibeah, a town that belonged to the Philistine people group. ¹⁶The men in the Israelite army camp heard that Zimri had secretly planned to kill King Elah, and then had killed him. So on that day the soldiers chose Omri, the commander of their army, to become the king of Israel.

¹⁷The Israelite army was camped near Gibbethon. When they heard what Zimri had done, they left there and went to Tirzah, and surrounded the city. ¹⁸When Zimri realized that the city was about to be captured, he went into his palace and set it on fire. So the palace burned down, and he died in the fire. ¹⁹He died because he had sinned by doing many things that Yahweh said were evil. Jeroboam had induced the Israelite people to sin, and Zimri sinned just like Jeroboam had sinned.

²⁰All the other things that Zimri did, and the record of how he rebelled against King Elah, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

²¹After Zimri died, the Israelite people were divided among themselves. One group wanted Tibni son of Ginath, to be their king. The other group wanted Omri to be the king. ²²Those who supported Omri were stronger than those who supported Tibni. So Tibni was killed, and Omri became king.

²³Omri became king when Asa had been king of Judah for almost thirty-one years. Omri ruled Israel for twelve years. For the first six years he ruled in Tirzah. ²⁴Then he bought a hill from a man named Shemer and paid him about sixty-six kilograms of silver for it. Then Omri ordered his men to build a city on that hill, and he called it Samaria, to honor Shemer, the man who owned it previously.

²⁵But Omri did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did more evil deeds than any of the kings who ruled Israel before he did. ²⁶When Jeroboam was previously the king, he had induced the Israelite people to sin, and Omri committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam did. The Israelite people caused Yahweh, the God the Israelite people had worshiped, to become very angry, because they worshiped worthless idols.

²⁷Everything that Omri did, and the record of the victories that his army won, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ²⁸After Omri died, he was buried in Samaria, and his son Ahab became king.

²⁹Ahab became king of Israel when Asa had ruled Judah for almost thirty-eight years. Ahab ruled in the city of Samaria for twenty-two years. ³⁰Ahab did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did more evil deeds than any of the kings who ruled Israel before he did. ³¹He committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam did, but he did things that were worse than the things that Jeroboam did. He married a woman named Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the city of Sidon. Then Ahab started to worship Baal, the god that the Canaan people group worshiped. ³²He built a temple in Samaria in order that the Israelite people could worship Baal there, and he put an altar there for making sacrifices to Baal. ³³He also made an idol that represented Asherah, Baal's wife. He did many more things that caused Yahweh to become angry. He did more evil things than any of the previous kings of Israel had done.

³⁴During the years that Ahab ruled, Hiel, a man from the city of Bethel, rebuilt the city of Jericho. But when he started to rebuild the city, his oldest son Abiram died. And when the city was finished, while Hiel was building the city gates, his youngest son Segub died. They died just as Yahweh had told Joshua would happen to the sons of anyone who would rebuild Jericho.

Chapter 17

¹Elijah was a prophet who lived in the city of Tishbe in the region of Gilead. One day he went to King Ahab and said to him, "Yahweh is the God whom we Israelites worship and the God whom I worship and serve. Just as certainly as Yahweh lives, there will be no dew or rain for the next few years, unless I command it to fall."

²Then Yahweh said to Elijah, ³"Because you have made the king angry with you, escape from the king and, go to the east, to the Kerith Brook, east of where it flows into the Jordan River. ⁴You will be able to drink water from the brook, and you will be able to eat what the crows bring to you, because I have commanded them to bring food to you."

⁵So Elijah did what Yahweh commanded him to do. He went and camped alongside Kerith Brook, east of the Jordan River. ⁶Crows brought bread and meat to him every morning and every evening, and he drank water from the brook.

⁷But after a while, the water in the brook dried up, because rain did not fall anywhere in the land. ⁸Then Yahweh said to Elijah, ⁹"Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. There is a widow there who will give you food to eat. I have already told her what to do about that." ¹⁰So Elijah did what God said. He went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow who was gathering sticks. He said to her, "Would you please bring me a cup of water?" ¹¹While she was going to get it, he called out to her, "Bring me a piece of bread, too!"

¹²But she replied, "Your God knows that what I am telling you is true. I do not have even one piece of bread in my house. I have only a handful of flour in a jar, and a little olive oil in a jug. I was gathering a few sticks to use these to make a fire and cook one more meal, and then after my son and I eat that, we will die from hunger."

¹³But Elijah said to her, "Do not be worried! Go home and do what you said that you were going to do. But first, bake me a little loaf of bread and bring it to me. After you do that, take what is left and prepare some food for you and your son. ¹⁴I know that you will be able to do that, because Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says this, 'There will always be plenty of flour and olive oil left in your containers, until the time when I send rain again and the crops grow again!'"

¹⁵So the woman did exactly what Elijah told her to do. And she and her son and Elijah had enough food every day, ¹⁶because the flour in the jar was never finished, and the jug of oil was never empty. That happened just like Yahweh had told Elijah that it would happen.

¹⁷Some time later, the woman's son became sick. He continued to get worse, and finally he died. ¹⁸So the woman went to Elijah and said to him, "You are a prophet; so why have you done this to me? Have you come here to punish me for my sins by causing my son to die?"

¹⁹But Elijah replied, "Give your son to me." So she gave her son to him, and he took the boy's body from her and carried it up the steps to the room where he stayed. He laid the boy's body on his bed. ²⁰Then Elijah cried out to Yahweh, "O Yahweh my God, this widow has kindly allowed me to stay in her home. So why have you brought this tragedy to her and caused her son to die?" ²¹Then Elijah stretched himself on top of the boy's body and called out to Yahweh saying, "Yahweh my God, please allow this boy to become alive again!" He did this three times.

²²Yahweh heard what Elijah prayed, and he caused the boy to become alive again. ²³Elijah carried the boy down the steps and gave him to his mother. He said, "Look, your son is alive!"

²⁴The woman said to Elijah, "Now I know for certain that you are a prophet and that the words that you speak are truly from Yahweh!"

Chapter 18

¹For almost three years there was no rain in Samaria. Then Yahweh said this to Elijah: "Go and meet with King Ahab and tell him that I will soon send rain." ²So Elijah went to talk to Ahab.

In Samaria there was almost no food for anyone to eat. ³There was a man there named Obadiah. He was in charge of the king's palace. He greatly revered Yahweh. ⁴One time when Queen Jezebel had tried to kill all Yahweh's

prophets, Obadiah hid a hundred of them in two caves. He put fifty prophets in each cave, and he brought food and water to them.

⁵By this time, the famine had become very severe in Samaria. So Ahab summoned Obadiah and said to him, "We must look near every spring and in every valley to see if we can find enough grass to give to some of my horses and mules, so that they will not all die." ⁶So they both started walking through the land. Obadiah went by himself in one direction, and Ahab went in another direction by himself.

⁷While Obadiah was walking along, he saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized Elijah and bowed down in front of him and said, "Is it really you, Elijah, my master?"

⁸Elijah replied, "Yes. Now go and tell Ahab your master that I am here."

⁹Obadiah objected. He said, "Sir, I have not harmed you at all. So why are you sending me back to Ahab? He will kill me!" ¹⁰Yahweh your God knows that I am telling the truth when I solemnly declare that King Ahab has searched in every kingdom to find you. Each time that some king said to him, 'Elijah is not here,' Ahab demanded that the king of that country solemnly swear that the king was telling the truth. ¹¹Now you say to me, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here!' ¹²But as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of Yahweh will carry you away, and I will not know where he will take you. So when I tell Ahab that you are here and he comes to me and he does not find you here, he will kill me! But I do not deserve to die because I have revered Yahweh since I was a boy. ¹³My master, have you not heard about what I did when Jezebel wanted to kill all of Yahweh's prophets? I hid a hundred of them in two caves and took food and water to them. ¹⁴Now, sir, you say, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here.' But if I do that, and he comes and you are not here, he will kill me!"

¹⁵But Elijah replied, "Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the one whom I serve, knows that I am telling the truth as I solemnly declare that I will go to meet with Ahab today."

¹⁶So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come. Ahab went to meet with him. ¹⁷When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, the one who causes trouble for the people of Israel?"

¹⁸Elijah replied, "It is not I who have caused trouble for the people of Israel! You and your family are the ones who have caused trouble! You have refused to obey Yahweh's commands, and you have worshiped the idols of Baal instead. ¹⁹So now, command all the Israelite people to come to Mount Carmel, and be sure to bring all the 450 prophets who worship Baal and the four hundred prophets who worship the goddess Asherah, the ones to whom your wife Jezebel always invites to eat with her."

²⁰So Ahab summoned all his prophets and all the other Israelite people to the top of Mount Carmel, and Elijah went up there too. ²¹Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to be undecided about who is truly God? If Yahweh is God, then worship him. If Baal is truly God, then worship him!" But the people said nothing in reply, because they were afraid of what Jezebel would do to them if they admitted that they worshiped Yahweh.

²²Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only true prophet of Yahweh who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. ²³Bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose the one that they want. They must kill it and cut it into pieces and lay the pieces on the wood that is on the altar that they made. But they must not light a fire under the wood. I will kill the other bull and cut it in pieces and lay the pieces on the altar that I make. ²⁴Then they must call to their god, and I will call to Yahweh. The god who answers by lighting a fire to the wood that is on that altar is the true God!"

Then all the people thought that Elijah's suggestion was good.

²⁵Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You call to Baal first, because there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls and prepare it, and then call to your god. But do not light a fire under the wood!" ²⁶So they killed one of the bulls and cut it up and placed the pieces on the altar. Then they called out to Baal all morning. They shouted, "Baal, answer us!" But no one answered. There was no reply at all.

Then they danced wildly around the altar that they had made.

²⁷About noontime, Elijah started to make fun of them. He said, "Surely Baal is a god, so it seems that you must shout louder! Perhaps he is thinking about something, or perhaps he has gone to the toilet. Or perhaps he is traveling somewhere, or perhaps he is asleep and you need to wake him up!" ²⁸So they shouted louder. Then, doing one of the things that they frequently did when they worshiped Baal, they slashed themselves with knives and swords until a lot of blood flowed. ²⁹They continued calling out to Baal all afternoon. But there was no voice that gave a reply, no answer, no god who paid attention.

³⁰Then Elijah called to the people saying, "Come closer!" So they all crowded around him. Then Elijah repaired the altar of Yahweh that had been ruined by the prophets of Baal. ³¹Then he took twelve large stones, each one to represent one of the Israelite tribes, whose ancestors were the twelve sons of Jacob. ³²With these stones he rebuilt Yahweh's altar. Then around the altar he dug a little ditch that was large enough to hold about fifteen liters of water. ³³He piled wood on top of the stones. He killed the bull and cut it in pieces. Then he laid the pieces on top of the wood. Then he said, "Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water on top of the pieces of meat and the wood." So they did that.

³⁴Then he said, "Do the same thing again!" So they did it again. Then he said, "Do it a third time!" So they did it again.

³⁵As a result, the water flowed down below the altar and filled the ditches.

³⁶When it was time to offer the evening sacrifices, Elijah walked close to the altar and prayed. He said, "Yahweh, you who are the God that our ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob worshiped, prove today that you are the God whom the Israelite people should worship, and prove that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all these things because you told me to do them. ³⁷Yahweh, answer me! Answer me in order that these people will know that you, Yahweh, are God and that you have caused them to trust in you again!"

³⁸Immediately a fire from Yahweh flashed down from the sky. The fire burned up the pieces of meat, the wood, the stones, and the dirt that was around the altar. It even dried up all the water in the ditch!

³⁹When the people saw that, they prostrated themselves on the ground and shouted, "Yahweh is God! Yahweh is God!"

⁴⁰Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize all the prophets of Baal! Do not allow any of them to escape!" So the people seized all the prophets of Baal, and took them down the mountain to the river Kishon, and Elijah killed them all there.

⁴¹Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go and get something to eat and drink. But do it quickly, because it is soon going to rain very hard!" ⁴²So Ahab and his men left to prepare a big meal. But Elijah went back up to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed.

⁴³Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea, to see if there are any rain clouds." So his servant went and looked, and came back and said, "I do not see anything." This happened six times. ⁴⁴But when the servant went the seventh time, he came back and said, "I saw a very small cloud above the sea. As I extend my arm, the cloud is about the size of my hand."

Then Elijah shouted to him, "Go and tell King Ahab to get his chariot ready and go home immediately! If he does not do that, the rain will stop him!" ⁴⁵Very soon the sky was full of black clouds. There was a strong wind, and then it began to rain very hard. Ahab got into his chariot and started to return to the city of Jezreel. ⁴⁶Yahweh gave extra strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt in order to run fast, and he ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel.

Chapter 19

¹When Ahab got home, he told his wife Jezebel what Elijah had done. He told her that Elijah had killed all the prophets of Baal. ²So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah, "By this time tomorrow I will have killed you, just like you killed all those prophets of Baal. If I do not do that, I hope the gods will kill me."

³When Elijah received her message, he was afraid. So taking his servant with him, he fled in order that he would not be killed. He went far south to Beersheba, in Judah. He left his servant there. ⁴Then he went by himself further south into the desert. He walked all day. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that Yahweh would allow him to die. He said, "Yahweh, I cannot endure anymore. So allow me to die, because for me to live is no better than being with my ancestors who have died."

⁵Then he lay down under the broom tree and slept. But while he was sleeping, an angel touched him and woke him up and said to him, "Get up and eat some food!"

⁶Elijah looked around and saw some bread which had been baked on hot stones, and he also saw a jar of water. So he ate some bread and drank some water and lay down to sleep again.

⁷Then the angel who had been sent by Yahweh came again and touched him, and said, "Get up and eat some more food, because you need more strength to go on a long journey." ⁸So he got up and ate and drank some more; because he did that, he got enough strength to travel for forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, the mountain that was dedicated to God. ⁹He went into a cave there and slept there that night.

The next morning, Yahweh said to him, "Elijah, why are you here?" ¹⁰Elijah replied, "I have zealously served you, Yahweh, commander of angel armies. But the Israelite people have rejected the agreement that they made with you. They have torn down your altars, and they have killed all of your prophets. I am the only one whom they have not killed, and now they are trying to kill me, too. So I am running away from them."

¹¹Yahweh said to him, "Go out and stand in front of me on this mountain while I pass by." So Elijah did that. While he was standing there, a strong windstorm struck the mountain. As a result, rocks were loosened from the mountainside. But Yahweh was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake.

¹²Then there was a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire. Then there was a sound like someone whispering quietly.

¹³When Elijah heard that, he wrapped his cloak around his face. He went out of the cave and stood at its entrance. And he heard Yahweh speaking to him, saying again, "Elijah, why are you here?"

¹⁴He replied again, "I have zealously served you, Yahweh, commander of angel armies. But the Israelite people have rejected the agreement that they made with you. They have torn down your altars, and they have killed all of your prophets. I am the only one whom they have not killed, and now they are trying to kill me, too. So I am running away from them."

¹⁵Then Yahweh told him, "Go back to the wilderness near Damascus. When you arrive there anoint with olive oil a man named Hazael, to appoint him to be the king of Aram. ¹⁶Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be the king of Israel, and also anoint Elisha son of Shaphat, from the city of Abel Meholah, to become my prophet after you are gone. ¹⁷Hazael's army will kill many people, and those who escape from being killed by his army will be killed by Jehu's army, and those who escape from being killed by Jehu's army will be killed by Elisha. ¹⁸But you need to know that there are still seven thousand people in Israel who have never bowed to worship Baal or kissed his idol."

¹⁹So Elijah went to Aram and found Elisha as he was plowing a field with a team of oxen. There were eleven other men who were in front of him, plowing with teams of oxen in the same field. Elijah went to Elisha, and took off his own coat and put it on Elisha, to show Elisha that he wanted Elisha to take his place as a prophet. Then he started to walk away. ²⁰Elisha left the oxen standing there and ran after Elijah, and said to him, "I will go with you, but first let me kiss my parents goodbye."

Elijah replied, "Very well, go home. But do not forget why I have given my cloak to you!" ²¹So Elisha went back home. He killed his oxen and cut them in pieces and used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast the meat. He distributed the meat to the other people in his town, and they all ate some. Then he went with Elijah and became his helper.

Chapter 20

¹Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, gathered all his army, and he brought thirty-two lesser kings to join him with their armies and horses and chariots. They marched to the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel, and surrounded it and prepared to attack it. ²Ben Hadad sent messengers into the city to King Ahab, and they said this to him: "This is what King Ben Hadad says: ³You must give to me all your silver and gold, your good-looking wives and strongest children."

⁴The king of Israel replied to them, "Tell this to King Ben Hadad, 'I agree to do what you requested. You can have me and everything that I own.'"

⁵The messengers told that to Ben Hadad, and he sent them back with another message: "I sent a message to you saying that you must give me all your silver and gold and your wives and your children. ⁶But in addition to that, about this time tomorrow, I will send some of my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials, and to bring to me everything that they see is valuable."

⁷King Ahab summoned all the leaders of Israel, and said to them, "You can see for yourselves that this man is trying to cause much trouble. He sent me a message insisting that I must give him my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, and I agreed to do that."

⁸The leaders and all the other people said to him, "Do not pay any attention to him! Do not do what he is requesting!"

⁹So Ahab said to Ben Hadad's messengers, "Tell the king that I agree to give him the things that he first requested, but I do not agree to allow his officials to take anything that they want from my palace and from the houses of my officials." So the messengers reported that to King Ben Hadad, and they returned with another message from Ben Hadad.

¹⁰In that message he said, "We will destroy your city completely, with the result that there will not be enough ashes left for each of my soldiers to have one handful! I hope that the gods will strike me dead if we do not do that!"

¹¹King Ahab replied to the messengers, "Tell King Ben Hadad this: No one wins a battle before he fights it, so do not boast before you should."

¹²Ben Hadad heard that message while he and the other rulers were drinking wine in their temporary shelters. He told his men to prepare to attack the city. So his men did that.

¹³At that moment, a prophet came to King Ahab and said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'Do not be at all afraid of the large enemy army that you see! I will enable your army to defeat them today, and you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who has done it.'"

¹⁴Ahab asked, "What group of our army will defeat them?" The prophet replied, "The young soldiers whom the district governors command will do it." The king asked, "Who should lead the attack?" The prophet replied, "You should!"

¹⁵So Ahab gathered the young soldiers who were commanded by the district governors. There were 232 of those men. Then he also summoned all the Israelite army. There were only seven thousand soldiers. ¹⁶They started to attack at noon, while Ben Hadad and the other rulers were getting drunk in their temporary shelters. ¹⁷The young

soldiers advanced first. Some scouts who had been sent out by Ben Hadad reported to him, "There are men coming out of Samaria!"

¹⁸He said, "It does not matter whether they are coming to fight against us or to request for peace. Capture them, but do not kill them!"

¹⁹The young Israelite soldiers went out of the city to attack the Aramean army, and the other soldiers in the Israelite army followed them. ²⁰Each Israelite soldier killed an Aramean soldier. The rest of the Aramean army then ran away, and the Israelite soldiers pursued them. But King Ben Hadad escaped riding his horse, along with some other men riding horses. ²¹Then the king of Israel went out of the city; he and his soldiers captured all the other Aramean horses and chariots, and also killed a large number of Aramean soldiers.

²²Then that same prophet went to King Ahab and said to him, "Go back and prepare your soldiers, and think carefully about what will be necessary for you to do, because the king of Aram will attack with his army again in the springtime of next year."

²³After the Aramean army was defeated, Ben Hadad's officials said to him, "The gods that the Israelites worship are gods who live in the hills. Samaria is built on a hill, and that is why their soldiers were able to defeat us. But if we fight against them in the plains, we certainly will be able to defeat them. ²⁴So, this is what you should do: You must remove the thirty-two kings who are leading your troops and replace them with army commanders. ²⁵Then gather an army like the army that was defeated. Gather an army that has as many horses and chariots as the first army had. Then we will fight the Israelites in the plains, and we will surely defeat them."

Ben Hadad agreed with them, and he did what they suggested. ²⁶In the spring of the following year, he gathered his soldiers and marched with them to the city of Aphek east of the Sea of Galilee, to fight against the Israelite army. ²⁷The Israelite army was also gathered together, and they were given the things that they needed for the battle. Then they marched out and formed two groups facing the Aramean army. Their army was very small. They resembled two small flocks of goats, whereas the Aramean army was very large and spread all over the countryside.

²⁸A prophet came to King Ahab and said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'The Arameans say that I am a god who lives in the hills, and that I am not a god who lives in the valleys. So I will show that they are wrong by enabling your men to defeat this huge army in the valley, and you will know that I, Yahweh, have done it.'"

²⁹The two armies stayed in their tents for seven days, in groups that faced each other. Then, on the seventh day, they started fighting. The Israelite army killed 100,000 Aramean soldiers. ³⁰The other Aramean soldiers ran away into Aphek. Then the wall of the city collapsed and killed twenty-seven thousand more Aramean soldiers.

Ben Hadad also escaped into the city and hid in the back room of a house. ³¹His officials went to him and said, "We have heard a report that the Israelites act mercifully. So allow us to go to the king of Israel, wearing coarse sacks around our waists and ropes on our heads to indicate that we will be his slaves. Perhaps if we do that, he will allow you to remain alive."

³²The king permitted them to do that, so they wrapped coarse sacks around their waists and put ropes on their heads, and they went to the king of Israel and said to him, "Ben Hadad, who greatly respects you, says, 'Please do not kill me.'" Ahab replied, "Is he still alive? He is like a brother to me!"

³³Ben Hadad's officials were trying to find out if Ahab would act mercifully, and when Ahab said "brother," they were optimistic. So they replied, "Yes, he is like your brother!" Ahab said, "Go and bring him to me." So they went and brought Ben Hadad to him. When Ben Hadad arrived, Ahab told him to get in the chariot and sit with him.

³⁴Ben Hadad said to him, "I will give back to you the towns that my father's army took from your father. And I will allow you to set up market areas for your merchants in Damascus my capital, just as my father did in Samaria your capital." Ahab replied, "Because you agree to do that, I will not execute you." So Ahab made an agreement with Ben Hadad, and allowed him to go home.

³⁵Then Yahweh spoke to a member of an association of prophets and told him to request a fellow prophet to strike him. But that man refused to do it.

³⁶So the prophet said to him, "Because you refused to obey what Yahweh told you to do, a lion will kill you as soon as you leave me." And as soon as he left that prophet, a lion suddenly met him and killed him.

³⁷Then the prophet found another prophet, and said to him, "Strike me!" So that man hit him very hard and injured him. ³⁸Then the prophet put a large bandage over his face so that no one would recognize him. Then he went and stood alongside the road, waiting for the king to come by. ³⁹When the king passed by, the prophet cried out to him, saying "Your Majesty, after I was wounded while I was fighting in a battle, a soldier brought to me one of our enemies who he had captured, and said to me, 'Guard this man! If he escapes, you must pay me thirty-three kilograms of silver; if you do not pay that, you will be executed!' ⁴⁰But while I was busy doing other things, the man escaped!" The king of Israel said to him, "That is your problem! You yourself have said that you deserve to be punished."

⁴¹The prophet immediately took off the bandage, and the king of Israel recognized that he was one of the prophets. ⁴²The prophet said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'You have allowed that man Ben Hadad to escape after I commanded you to be sure to execute him! Since you did not do that, you will be killed instead. And your army will be destroyed because you allowed some of his army to escape!'" ⁴³The king went back home to Samaria, very angry and depressed.

Chapter 21

¹King Ahab had a palace in the city of Jezreel. Near the palace was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth.

²One day, Ahab went to Naboth and said to him, "Your vineyard is close to my palace. I would like to buy it, so that I can plant some vegetables there. I will give you in exchange a better vineyard somewhere else, or if you prefer, I will pay you for your vineyard."

³But Naboth replied, "That land belonged to my ancestors, so I want to keep it. I hope that Yahweh will never allow me to give that land to you!"

⁴So Ahab became very sullen and angry because of what Naboth had said. He went home and lay down on his bed. He turned his face toward the wall, and he refused to eat anything.

⁵His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so depressed? Why are you refusing to eat anything?"

⁶Ahab replied, "I talked to Naboth, that man from Jezreel. I told him that I wanted his vineyard. I said, 'I will buy it from you, or I will give you another vineyard for it.' But he refused to let me have it."

⁷His wife replied, "You are the king of Israel, so you can get whatever you want! Get up, and eat some food and do not worry about what Naboth said. I will get Naboth's vineyard for you."

⁸Then Jezebel wrote some letters, and she signed Ahab's name on them. She used his official seal to seal them. Then she sent them to the older leaders and other important men who lived near Naboth and who decided public matters with him. ⁹This is what she wrote in the letters: "Proclaim a day when all the people will gather together and fast. Give to Naboth an important place to sit among them. ¹⁰Then find two men who always cause trouble. Give them places to sit opposite him. Tell these men to testify that they heard Naboth say things that criticized God and the king. Then take Naboth out of the city and kill him by throwing stones at him."

¹¹The leaders received the letters and did what Jezebel had written in the letters for them to do. ¹²They declared a day on which the people would all go without food. And they gave Naboth a seat in a place where honored people sat, in front of the people. ¹³Two men who always caused trouble sat opposite Naboth. While everyone was listening, they stated that they had heard Naboth say things that criticized God and the king. So the people seized

Naboth. They took him outside the city and killed him by throwing stones at him. ¹⁴Then those leaders sent a message to Jezebel, saying, "We have executed Naboth."

¹⁵When Jezebel found out that Naboth had been killed, she told Ahab, "Naboth is dead. Now you can go and take possession of the vineyard that he refused to sell to you." ¹⁶When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went to the vineyard to claim that he now owned it.

¹⁷Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah the prophet. He said, ¹⁸"Go to Samaria and talk to Ahab, the king of Israel. He is in the vineyard of a man named Naboth. He has gone there to claim that he now owns it. ¹⁹Tell Ahab that this is what I, Yahweh, say to him, 'You have murdered Naboth and taken his land. So I am telling you this. In the same place where Naboth died and dogs came and licked up Naboth's blood, you will die and the dogs will lick up your blood, too!'"

²⁰So when Elijah met with Ahab, Ahab said to him, "You, my enemy, have found me!" Elijah answered, "Yes, I have found you. You have never stopped doing the things that Yahweh says are wrong.

²¹So this is what Yahweh says to you, 'I will soon get rid of you. I will kill you, and I will also kill every male in your household, including those who are slaves and those who are not slaves. ²²Your family will all be killed, just like the family of King Jeroboam and like the family of King Baasha were killed. I will get rid of you because you have caused me to become very angry, and you have also induced the Israelite people to sin.'

²³Yahweh has also told me that your wife Jezebel will be killed, and dogs in Jezreel will eat her body. ²⁴The dead bodies of the members of your family who die in this city will not be buried. They will be eaten by dogs, and the bodies of those who die in the fields will be eaten by vultures."

²⁵There was no man who gave himself as completely to do things that Yahweh said were evil like Ahab did. But his wife Jezebel urged him to do many of those things. ²⁶The most disgusting thing that Ahab did was to worship idols, just like the Amor people group had done. And that is why Yahweh took their land from them and gave it to the Israelites.

²⁷After Elijah finished talking to Ahab, Ahab tore his clothes to show that he was sorry for all the sins that he had committed. He put on rough clothes that were made from sacks, and he refused to eat anything. He even wore those rough clothes made from sacks when he slept, to show that he was sorry.

²⁸Then Yahweh said this to Elijah, ²⁹"I have seen that Ahab is now very sorry for all the evil things that he has done. So the things that I promised to do to his family will not happen while he is still alive. I will cause them to happen after his son becomes king. Then those things will happen to his family."

Chapter 22

¹For almost three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ²Then King Jehoshaphat, who ruled Judah, went to visit King Ahab, who ruled Israel. ³While they were talking, Ahab said to his officials, "Do you realize that the Arameans are still occupying our city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead? And we are doing nothing to retake that city!" ⁴Then he turned toward Jehoshaphat and asked, "Will your army join my army to fight against the people of Ramoth and retake that city?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "Certainly! I will do whatever you want, and you may command my troops. You may take my horses into battle, also." ⁵Then he added, "But we should ask Yahweh first, to find out what he wants us to do." ⁶So Ahab summoned about four hundred of his prophets together, and he asked them, "Should my army go to fight the people in Ramoth and retake that city, or not?"

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

⁷But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no other prophet of Yahweh here whom we can ask?"

⁸The king of Israel replied, "There is one other man we can ask. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him, because when he prophesies he never says that anything good will happen to me. He always predicts that bad things will happen to me."

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

⁹So the king of Israel told one of his officers to summon Micaiah immediately.

¹⁰The king of Israel and the king of Judah were both wearing their royal robes and sitting on thrones at a gate in the city wall of Samaria. Many prophets were speaking messages to them. ¹¹One of them, whose name was Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, had made from iron something that resembled horns of a bull. Then he proclaimed to Ahab, "This is what Yahweh says, 'With horns like these your army will keep attacking the Arameans as a bull attacks another animal, until you completely destroy them!'"

¹²All the other prophets of Ahab agreed. They said, "Yes! If you go up to attack Ramoth in Gilead, you will be successful, because Yahweh will enable you to defeat them!"

¹³Meanwhile, the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Listen to me! All the other prophets are predicting that the king's army will defeat the Arameans. So be sure that you agree with them and say what will be favorable."

¹⁴But Micaiah replied, "As surely as Yahweh lives, I will tell Ahab only what Yahweh tells me to say."

¹⁵When Micaiah came to Ahab, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to fight against the people of Ramoth, or not?"

Micaiah replied, "Of course you should go! Yahweh will enable your army to defeat them!" ¹⁶But King Ahab realized that Micaiah was being sarcastic, so he said to Micaiah, "I have told you many times that you must always tell only the truth when you say what Yahweh has revealed to you!"

¹⁷So Micaiah said to him, "The truth is that in a vision I saw all the troops of Israel scattered on the mountains. They seemed to be like sheep that did not have a shepherd. And Yahweh said, 'Their master has been killed. So tell them all to go home peacefully.'"

¹⁸Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I told you that he never predicts that anything good will happen to me! He always predicts that bad things will happen to me."

¹⁹But Micaiah continued, saying, "Listen to what Yahweh showed to me! In a vision I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the armies of heaven surrounding him, on his right side and on his left side. ²⁰And Yahweh said, 'Who can persuade Ahab to go to fight against the people of Ramoth, in order that he may be killed there?'

Some suggested one thing, and others suggested something else. ²¹Finally one spirit came to Yahweh and said, 'I will deceive him!'

²²Yahweh asked him, 'How will you do it?' The spirit replied, 'I will go and inspire all of Ahab's prophets to tell lies.' Yahweh said, 'You will be successful; go and do it!' ²³So now I tell you that Yahweh has let all of your prophets lie to you. Yahweh has decided that something terrible will happen to you."

²⁴Then Zedekiah walked over to Micaiah and slapped him on his face. He said, "Do you think that Yahweh's Spirit left me in order to speak to you?"

²⁵Micaiah replied, "You will find out for yourself to which of us Yahweh's Spirit has truly spoken on the day when you go into a room of some house to hide from the Aramean troops!"

²⁶King Ahab commanded his soldiers, "Seize Micaiah and take him to Amon, the governor of this city, and to my son Joash. ²⁷Tell them that I have commanded that they should put this man in prison and give him only bread and water. Do not give him anything else to eat until I return safely from the battle!"

²⁸Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, it will be clear that it was not Yahweh who told me what to say to you!" Then he said to all those who were standing there, "Do not forget what I have said to King Ahab!"

²⁹So the king of Israel and the king of Judah led their armies to Ramoth in Gilead. ³⁰King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will put on different clothes, in order that no one will recognize that I am the king. But you should wear your royal robe." So Ahab disguised himself, and they both went into the battle.

³¹The King of Aram had said to his thirty-two men who were driving the chariots, "Attack only the king of Israel!"

³²So when the men who were driving the Aramean chariots saw Jehoshaphat wearing the royal robes, they pursued him. They shouted, "There is the king of Israel!" But when Jehoshaphat cried out, ³³they realized that he was not the king of Israel. So they stopped pursuing him.

³⁴But one Aramean soldier shot an arrow at Ahab, without knowing that it was Ahab. The arrow struck Ahab between the places where the parts of his armor joined together. Ahab told the driver of his chariot, "Turn the chariot around and take me out of here! I have been severely wounded!" ³⁵The battle continued all the day. Ahab was sitting propped up in his chariot, facing the Aramean troops. The blood from his wound ran down to the floor of the chariot. And late in the afternoon he died. ³⁶Just as the sun was going down, someone among the Israelite troops shouted, "The battle is ended! Everyone should return home!"

³⁷So King Ahab died, and they took his body in the chariot to Samaria and buried his body there. ³⁸They washed his chariot alongside the pool in Samaria, a pool where the prostitutes bathed. And dogs came and licked the king's blood, just like Yahweh had predicted would happen.

³⁹The account of the other things that happened while Ahab was ruling, and about the palace decorated with much ivory that they built for him, and the cities that were built for him, was written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ⁴⁰When Ahab died, his body was buried where his ancestors were buried. Then his son Ahaziah became king.

⁴¹Before King Ahab died, when he had been ruling in Israel for four years, Asa's son Jehoshaphat started to rule in Judah. ⁴²Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³Jehoshaphat was a good king, just like his father Asa had been. He did things that pleased Yahweh. But while he was king, he did not remove all the pagan altars that had been built upon the hills. So the people continued to offer sacrifices to idols on those altars and burned incense there. ⁴⁴Jehoshaphat also made a peace treaty with the king of Israel.

⁴⁵All the other things that happened while Jehoshaphat was ruling, and the great things that he did and the victories his troops won, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah. ⁴⁶Jehoshaphat removed from the land the male prostitutes that still lived in that region. These were same the male prostitutes who had lived there in the time of his father Asa.

⁴⁷At that time, there was no king in Edom. A ruler who had been appointed by Jehoshaphat ruled there.

⁴⁸Jehoshaphat ordered some Israelite men to build a fleet of ships to sail south to the region of Ophir to get gold. But they were wrecked at Ezion Geber, so the ships never sailed. ⁴⁹Before the ships were wrecked, Ahab's son Ahaziah suggested to Jehoshaphat, "Allow my sailors to go with your sailors," but Jehoshaphat refused.

⁵⁰When Jehoshaphat died, his body was buried where his ancestors were buried in Jerusalem, the city where King David had ruled. Then Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became king.

⁵¹Before King Jehoshaphat died, when he had been ruling in Judah for seventeen years, Ahab's son Ahaziah began to rule in Israel. Ahaziah ruled in Samaria for two years. ⁵²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, doing the

evil things that his father and mother had done and the evil things that Jeroboam had done—the king who had induced all the Israelite people to sin by worshiping idols. ⁵³Ahaziah bowed in front of Baal's idol and worshiped it. That caused Yahweh, the God who is the true God of the Israelite people as well as all the world, to become very angry, just as Ahaziah's father had caused Yahweh to become angry.

2 Kings

Chapter 1

¹After King Ahab died, the country of Moab rebelled against Israel. ²One day, Ahaziah, the new king of Israel, fell through the wooden slats in his upstairs room, in his palace in Samaria, and was injured. So he sent for his messengers and commanded them, "Go and ask of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether or not I will recover from this injury."

³But the angel from Yahweh said to Elijah, the prophet from the city of Tishbe, "The king of Samaria is sending some messengers to Ekron. Go and meet them and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you wish to ask Baal-Zebub whether you will recover?' ⁴Yahweh says that you should tell King Ahaziah that he will not recover from his being injured; he will surely die." Then Elijah left.

⁵So Elijah went to meet the messengers and told that to them, and they returned to the king instead of going to Ekron. The king asked them, "Why have you come back so quickly?"

⁶They replied, "A man came to meet us and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him that Yahweh says, "'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you wish to ask Baal-Zebub whether you will recover'? Go tell the king that he will not recover from being injured; instead, he will surely die.'""

⁷The king said to them, "The man who came to meet you and told that to you, what did he look like?"

⁸They replied, "He was wearing a cloak made from camel hair and had a wide leather belt around his waist." The king exclaimed, "That must be Elijah!"

⁹Then the king sent an officer with fifty soldiers to seize Elijah. They found Elijah sitting on the top of a hill. The officer called out to him, "Prophet, the king commands that you come down here!"

¹⁰But Elijah replied to the officer, "I am a prophet, so I command that fire come down from the sky and burn up you and your fifty soldiers!" Immediately, fire came down from the sky and completely burned up the officer and his fifty soldiers.

¹¹When the king found out about that, he sent another officer with fifty more soldiers. They went to where Elijah was, and the officer called out to him, "Prophet, the king commands that you come down immediately!"

¹²But Elijah replied, "I am a prophet, so I command that fire come down from the sky and kill you and your soldiers!" Then a fire from God came down from the sky and killed that officer and his soldiers.

¹³When the king heard about that, he sent still another officer with fifty more soldiers. They went to where Elijah was; the officer prostrated himself in front of Elijah and said to him, "Prophet, I plead with you, be kind to me and my fifty soldiers, and do not kill us! ¹⁴We know that two times fire came down from the sky and killed officers and the soldiers with them. So now, please be kind to me!"

¹⁵Then the angel from Yahweh said to Elijah, "Go down and go with him. Do not be afraid of him." So Elijah went with them to the king.

¹⁶When Elijah arrived, he said to the king, "This is what Yahweh says: 'You sent messengers to go to Ekron to ask Baal-Zebub, their god, whether you would recover. You acted as though there is no God in Israel to consult. So you will not recover from being injured; instead, you are going to die!'" ¹⁷So Ahaziah died, which is what Yahweh told Elijah would happen. Ahaziah's younger brother Joram became the new king, at the same time that Jehoram son of

Jehoshaphat, had been ruling Judah for almost two years. Ahaziah's brother became the king because Ahaziah had no son to become the king.

¹⁸If you want to know about all the other things that Ahaziah did, they are written in the Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

Chapter 2

¹When Yahweh was about to take the prophet Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and his fellow prophet Elisha were traveling south from Gilgal. ²Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because Yahweh has told only me to go to the city of Bethel."

But Elisha replied, "Just as certainly as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not leave you!"

So they went down together to Bethel. ³An association of prophets at Bethel came to Elisha and Elijah; they asked Elisha, "Do you know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from you today?"

Elisha answered, "Certainly I know that, but do not talk about it!" ⁴Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because Yahweh has told only me to go to Jericho."

But Elisha replied again, "Just as certainly as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not leave you!"

So they went together to the city of Jericho.

⁵As they neared Jericho, another association of prophets who were from there came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from you today?"

He answered again, "Certainly I know that, but do not talk about it!"

⁶Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because Yahweh has told only me to go to the Jordan River."

But again Elisha replied, "As certainly as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not leave you!"

So they continued walking together. ⁷Fifty men from the association of prophets who were from Jericho also went, but they watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped at the edge of the Jordan River. ⁸Then Elijah rolled up his cloak and struck the water with it. A path opened up for them through the river, and they walked across as though they were on dry ground.

⁹When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "What do you want me to do for you before I am taken away?"

Elisha replied, "I want you to enable me to very powerfully continue your ministry."

¹⁰Elijah replied, "You have asked for something which is difficult for me to make happen. But if you see me when I am taken from you, you will get what you are requesting. But if you do not see me, then you will not get it."

¹¹As they were walking and talking, suddenly a chariot surrounded by fire pulled by horses surrounded by fire, appeared. The chariot driver drove the chariot between Elijah and Elisha and separated them. Then Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹²Elisha saw it. He cried out, "My father! My father! The Israelite chariots and their drivers have taken my master away!" They disappeared into the sky, and Elisha never saw Elijah again. Then Elisha tore his own robe into two pieces to show that he was deeply saddened. ¹³Elijah's cloak had fallen off when he was taken away, so Elisha picked it up and returned to the bank of the Jordan River. ¹⁴He rolled up the cloak and struck the water with it, and cried out, "Is Yahweh, the God of Elijah, here with me, too?" Then the water separated, and a path opened up for him, and Elisha went across.

¹⁵When the association of prophets from Jericho saw what happened, they exclaimed, "The Spirit of God has now given the same ability to Elisha that Elijah had!" They walked over to Elisha and bowed down in front of him. ¹⁶One of them said, "Sir, if you permit us, fifty of our strongest men will go and search for your master on the other side of the river. Perhaps the Spirit of Yahweh has left him on some mountain or in some valley."

Elisha replied, "No, do not send them."

¹⁷But they continued to urge him. Finally he was tired of saying "No," and he said, "Very well, send them." So fifty men searched for three days, but they did not find Elijah. ¹⁸They returned to Jericho, and Elisha was still there. He said to them, "I told you that you should not go, because you would not find him!"

¹⁹Then the leaders of Jericho came to talk with Elisha. One of them said, "Our master, we have a problem. You can see that this is a very nice place to live in. But the water is bad, and as a result, crops will not grow on the land."

²⁰Elisha said to them, "Put some salt in a new bowl and bring the bowl to me." So they brought it to him.

²¹Then Elisha went out to the spring from which the people in the town got water. He threw the salt into the spring. Then he said, "This is what Yahweh says: 'I have made this water good. No one will die anymore because of bad water, and the land will grow fruitful crops.'" ²²And the water became pure, just as Elisha said it would. Since that time it has always remained pure.

²³Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of young boys from Bethel saw him and started to make fun of him. They continued shouting, "Go away, you bald-headed man!" ²⁴Elisha turned around and reprimanded them in the name of Yahweh. Immediately two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them. ²⁵Elisha left Bethel and went to Mount Carmel, and after that he returned to the city of Samaria.

Chapter 3

¹After Jehoshaphat had been ruling Judah for almost eighteen years, Ahab's son Joram became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for twelve years. ²He did things that Yahweh said were evil, but he did not do as much evil as his father and mother had done, and he got rid of the stone pillar for worshipping Baal that his father had made. ³But he committed the sins that King Jeroboam had committed and which induced the Israelite people to sin, and he did not stop committing the same sins.

⁴Mesha, the king of Moab, raised sheep. Every year he was forced to give 100,000 lambs and the wool from 100,000 rams to the king of Israel, because his kingdom was controlled by the king of Israel. ⁵But after King Ahab died, Mesha rebelled against the king of Israel. ⁶So King Joram left Samaria to call together soldiers from across all Israel to go to war. ⁷Then he sent this message to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. So will your army join my army and fight against the army of Moab?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "Yes, we will help you. We are ready to do whatever you want us to. My soldiers and my horses are ready to help you."

⁸He asked, "On which road should we march to attack them?"

Joram replied, "We will go south to Jerusalem, where your army will join us. Then we will all go south of the Dead Sea and then turn north through the wilderness of Edom."

⁹So the king of Israel and his army went with the kings of Judah and Edom and their armies. They marched for seven days. Then there was no water left for their soldiers or for their animals that carried supplies.

¹⁰The king of Israel exclaimed, "This is a terrible situation! It seems that Yahweh will allow the three of us to be captured by the army of Moab!"

¹¹Jehoshaphat said, "Is there a prophet here who can ask Yahweh for us what we should do?"

One of Joram's army officers said, "Elisha son of Shaphat, is here. He was Elijah's assistant."

¹²Jehoshaphat said, "It will be good to ask him, because he speaks what Yahweh tells him to say."

So those three kings went to Elisha. ¹³Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Why do you come to me? Go and ask those prophets that your father and mother consulted!"

But Joram replied, "No, we want you to ask Yahweh, because it seems that Yahweh has brought us three kings together in order to allow the army of Moab to capture us."

¹⁴Elisha replied, "I serve Yahweh, the commander of the armies of angels in heaven. As surely as he lives, if I did not respect Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not even think about doing anything to help you. ¹⁵But bring a musician to me."

So they did that. When the musician played on his harp, Yahweh gave this message to Elisha. ¹⁶He said, "Yahweh says that he will cause this dry streambed to be full of water. ¹⁷The result will be that your soldiers and your animals that carry supplies and your livestock will have plenty of water to drink. ¹⁸That is not difficult for Yahweh to do. But He will do more than that. He will also enable you to defeat the army of Moab. ¹⁹You will conquer all their beautiful cities, cities that have high walls around them. You must cut down all their fruit trees, stop water from flowing from their springs, and ruin their fertile fields by covering them with rocks."

²⁰The next morning, at the time when they offered the sacrifices of grain, they were surprised to see water flowing from Edom and covering the ground.

²¹When the people of Moab heard that the three kings had come with their armies to fight against them, all the men who were able to fight in battles, from the youngest men to the oldest ones, were summoned, and they took their positions at the southern border of their land. ²²But when they rose early the next morning, they saw that the water across from them appeared to be as red as blood. ²³They exclaimed, "It is blood! The three enemy armies must have fought and killed each other! So let us go and take everything that they have left!"

²⁴But when they reached the area where the Israelite soldiers had set up their tents, the Israelites attacked the soldiers from Moab and forced them to retreat. The Israelite soldiers pursued the soldiers from Moab and killed many of them. ²⁵The Israelites also destroyed their cities. Whenever they passed fertile fields, they threw rocks on those fields until the fields were covered with rocks. They stopped water from flowing from the springs and cut down the fruit trees. Finally, only the capital city, Kir Hareseth, remained. The Israelite soldiers who threw stones with slings surrounded the city and attacked it. ²⁶When the king of Moab realized that his army was being defeated, he took with him seven hundred men who fought with swords, and they tried to force a way through the Israelite lines of soldiers to escape to get help from the king of Edom, whom they hoped would join them, but they were unable to escape. ²⁷Then the king of Moab took his oldest son, who would have become the next king, and killed him and offered him as a sacrifice to their god Chemosh, burning him on top of the city wall. Then God became very angry at the Israelite army, so the army left and went back to their own land.

Chapter 4

¹One day the widow of one of Yahweh's prophets came to Elisha and cried out to him, "My husband, who worked with you, is dead. You know that he revered Yahweh very much. But now someone to whom he owed a lot of money has come to me. I cannot pay him back, so he is threatening to take away my two sons to be his slaves as payment!"

²Elisha replied, "What can I do to help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?"

She replied, "We have only a container of olive oil. We have nothing else."

³Elisha said, "Go to your neighbors and borrow from them as many empty jars as you can. ⁴Then take the jars into your house with your sons. Shut the door. Then pour olive oil from your container into the other jars. When each jar is full, set it aside and fill another jar. Keep doing that until all the jars are full."

⁵So she did what Elisha told her to do. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she kept filling them. ⁶Soon all the jars were full. So she said to one of her sons, "Bring me another jar!" But he replied, "There are no more jars!" Right then the olive oil stopped flowing.

⁷When she told Elisha what had happened, he said to her, "Now sell the oil. And with the money you get, pay what you owe, and there will be enough extra money to keep buying food for yourself and your sons." So she did that.

⁸One day Elisha went to the city of Shunem. There was a wealthy woman who lived there with her husband. One day she invited Elisha to her house for a meal. Elisha went there, and from then on every time Elisha was in Shunem he went to their house to eat a meal. ⁹One day the woman said to her husband, "I am sure that this man who often comes here is a prophet who brings messages from God. ¹⁰I think we should make a small room for him on our flat roof, and put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp in it. If we do that, whenever he comes here, he will have a place to stay." So they did that.

¹¹One day Elisha returned to Shunem, and he went up to that room to rest. ¹²He said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the woman that I want to speak to her." So the servant went and told her. When she came to the doorway of Elisha's room, ¹³Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell her that we are both grateful for all the kind things that she has done for us. Then ask her what we can do for her. Ask, 'Do you want me to go to the king or the army commander to request something for you?'"

Gehazi gave her this message. She replied, "No, your master does not need to do that, because my family are able to give me what I need."

¹⁴Later, Elisha asked Gehazi, "What do you think that we can do for that woman?"

He replied, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is an old man."

¹⁵Elisha told Gehazi, "Call her back again." So Gehazi went and called her. And when the woman returned, as she stood in the doorway, ¹⁶Elisha said to her, "About this time next year you will be holding your infant son in your arms." But she protested, "Oh, Sir, you are a prophet who brings messages from God, so please do not deceive me by saying things like that!"

¹⁷But a few months later, the woman became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son at that time the following year, just like Elisha had predicted.

¹⁸When the child was growing up, one day he went out to the fields to see his father, who was working with the men who were harvesting grain. ¹⁹Suddenly the boy exclaimed, "My head hurts! My head hurts!"

His father said to one of the servants, "Carry him home to his mother!" ²⁰So the servant carried him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But at noontime the boy died. ²¹She carried him up the steps to the prophet's room and laid him on the bed. She left him there and went out and shut the door.

²²She then called out to her husband, saying, "Send to me one of the servants and a donkey so that I can ride on it quickly to the prophet, and then come back!" But she did not tell her husband that their son had died.

²³Her husband called out to her and said, "Why do you want to go today? This is not the day when we celebrate the festival of the new moon, and it is not a Sabbath day!"

But she only replied, "Just do what I requested and everything will be all right."

²⁴So she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Lead the donkey! Do not slow down for me unless I tell you to do so!" ²⁵As they approached Mount Carmel, where Elisha was, Elisha saw her in the distance. He said to Gehazi,

"Look, the woman from Shunem is coming! ²⁶Run to her, and ask her if everything is all right with her and her husband and with her child!"

So Gehazi ran to her and asked her, but she said nothing to Gehazi except, "Yes, everything is fine."

²⁷But when she came to where Elisha was, she prostrated herself on the ground in front of Elisha and took hold of his feet. Gehazi started to push her away, but Elisha said, "Do not push her away! Something is troubling her very much, but Yahweh has not told me what it is."

²⁸Then she said to Elisha, "O sir, I did not request you to enable me to give birth to a son, but I did say, 'Do not lie to me.'"

²⁹Then Elisha realized that something must have happened to her son. So he said to Gehazi, "Get ready to leave immediately. Take my staff stick and go to her home. Do not stop to talk to anyone on the way. Go quickly to where her son is and lay the staff on the child's face. If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will cause him to live again."

³⁰But the boy's mother said, "Just as certain as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not go home if you do not go with me." So Elisha returned with her to her home.

³¹But Gehazi hurried quickly ahead. When he got to the woman's home, he laid the staff on the child's face, but the child did not move or say anything.

So Gehazi returned to meet Elisha along the road, and told him, "The child is still dead." ³²When Elisha reached the house, he saw that the boy was lying dead on his bed. ³³Elisha went into the room by himself and shut the door and prayed to Yahweh. ³⁴Then he lay down on the boy's body, and put his mouth on the boy's mouth, and put his eyes on the boy's eyes, and put his hands on the boy's hands. Then the boy's body started to become warm!

³⁵Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room several times. Then he stretched his body on the boy's body again. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

³⁶Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. He said, "Call the boy's mother." So Gehazi went and called her, and when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son." ³⁷She gratefully prostrated herself at Elisha's feet. Then she picked up her son and carried him downstairs.

³⁸Then Elisha returned to Gilgal. But at that time there was a famine in that area. One day as the association of prophets was sitting in front of Elisha listening to what he was teaching, he said to his servant, "Put a large pot on the fire and make some stew for these men."

³⁹One of the prophets went out to the fields to gather some vegetables. But he gathered only some wild gourds and put them in his cloak and brought them back. He shredded them and put them in the pot, but he did not know that the gourds were poisonous. ⁴⁰He served the stew to the prophets, but after the men had eaten only a couple bites, they cried out, "Our master, there is something in the pot that will kill us!"

So they would not eat it. ⁴¹Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." They brought him some, and he threw it in the pot and he said, "It is all right now. You can eat it." And they ate it, and it did not harm them.

⁴²One day a man from the city of Baal Shalishah brought to Elisha a sack of freshly cut grain and twenty loaves of barley bread, made from the first grain that they had harvested that year.

Elisha said to his servant, "Give it to the group of prophets, so that they can eat it." ⁴³But his servant exclaimed, "Do you think that we can feed a hundred of us prophets with only that much? How can I place this before them all?"

But Elisha replied, "Give it to the prophets so that they can eat it, because Yahweh says that there will be plenty for all of them, and there will be some left over!" ⁴⁴After his servant gave it to the prophets, they ate all that they wanted, and there was food left over, just as Yahweh had promised.

Chapter 5

¹A man named Naaman was the commander of the army of Aram. Yahweh had enabled him to win many victories, and the king of Aram admired and honored him. Naaman was also a strong and brave soldier, but he had leprosy.

²Some time previously, groups of soldiers had invaded the land of Israel, and they had captured a young girl and taken her to Aram. She became a servant for Naaman's wife. ³One day, that girl said to her, "I wish that my master would go to see the prophet in the city of Samaria. That prophet would heal your husband from his leprosy."

⁴Naaman's wife told her husband what the girl from Israel had said, and Naaman told that to the king. ⁵⁻⁶The king said to him, "Very well, go and see the prophet. I will write a letter for you to take to the king of Israel, saying that I sent you." The king wrote in the letter, "I am sending this letter with my army commander Naaman, who serves me faithfully. I want you to heal him of his disease." So Naaman, assuming that the king of Israel was the prophet, took the letter and 330 kilograms of silver, 66 kilograms of gold, and ten sets of clothing, to give to the king of Israel, and he went to Samaria, taking along several servants.

⁷When he arrived in Samaria, he gave the letter to the king of Israel. The king read the letter. Then, being very dismayed, the king tore his clothes and said, "I am not God! I am not able to cause people to live or to die! Why does the one who wrote this letter request me to cure this man of his leprosy? I do not have power to cure leprosy. The king of Aram is merely looking for an excuse to attack us!"

⁸The prophet Elisha heard why the king of Israel had torn his robe, so he sent a message to the king, saying, "Why are you upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will find out that I am a true prophet in Israel." ⁹So Naaman went with his horses and chariots to Elisha's house and waited outside the door. ¹⁰But Elisha did not come to the door. Instead, he sent a messenger to Naaman to tell him, "Go to the Jordan River and go down seven times into the water. Then your skin will be well, and you will no longer have leprosy."

¹¹But Naaman became very angry. He said, "I thought that surely he would wave his hand over the leprosy, and pray to Yahweh, and heal me! ¹²Surely the Abana River and the Pharpar River in Damascus in my own country of Aram have better water than any in Israel! Can I not go into my rivers at home and be healed and cleansed?" So he turned and walked away in great disgust.

¹³But his servants came to him, and one of them said, "Sir, if that prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would certainly have done it. So why do you refuse to do such a simple thing he asks, when he says, "Go down seven times in the water and be clean?" ¹⁴So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and went into the water seven times, as the prophet had instructed, and his skin became healthy, like the smooth skin of a young child.

¹⁵Then Naaman and those who were with him went back to talk to Elisha. They stood in front of him, and Naaman said, "Now I know that there are no real gods anywhere else in the world, but there is the true God here in Israel! So now please accept these gifts that I have brought to you!"

¹⁶But Elisha replied, "Just as certainly as Yahweh, the one whom I serve, lives, I will not accept any gifts." Naaman kept urging him to accept the gifts, but Elisha kept refusing.

¹⁷Then Naaman said, "Very well, but I have one request. This soil here in Israel is Yahweh's soil, so please allow me to take some soil from this place and put it in sacks on two mules. Then I will take it back home with me and make an altar on this soil. From now on, I will offer sacrifices to Yahweh on that altar. I will not offer sacrifices to any other god. ¹⁸However, when my master, the king, goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship him, I ask that Yahweh will forgive me because I will have to bow down, too."

¹⁹Elisha replied, "Go home, and do not worry about that." So Naaman and his servants started to travel home.

²⁰But then Elisha's servant Gehazi said to himself, "It is not good that my master has allowed this Aramean man to leave like this. He should have accepted his gifts. So just as certainly as Yahweh lives, I will go and catch up with Naaman and get something from him."

²¹So Gehazi hurried to catch up with Naaman. When Naaman saw Gehazi running toward him, he stopped the chariot in which he was riding, jumped out, and went to see what Gehazi wanted. He asked him, "Is everything all right?"

²²Gehazi replied, "Yes, but two young prophets from the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim live have just arrived. Elisha has sent me to tell you that he would like thirty-three kilograms of silver and two sets of clothing to give to them."

²³Naaman replied, "Certainly! You can have sixty-six kilograms of silver!" He urged Gehazi to take it. He also gave him two sets of clothing. He tied up the silver in two bags and gave them to two of his servants to carry back to Elisha. ²⁴But when they arrived at the hill where Elisha lived, Gehazi took the silver and the clothes from Naaman's servants and sent the servants back to Naaman. Then he took those things into his house and hid them. ²⁵When he went to Elisha, Elisha asked him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" Gehazi replied, "I did not go anywhere."

²⁶Elisha asked him, "Do you not realize that my spirit was there when Naaman got out of his chariot to talk with you? This is certainly not the time to accept gifts of money and clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and servants! ²⁷Because you have done this, you and your children and all your descendants, forever, will have leprosy just like Naaman had!" When Gehazi left the room, he was a leper. His skin was as white as snow.

Chapter 6

¹One day the association of prophets said to Elisha, "Look, this place where we meet together with you is very small. ²Allow us to go to the Jordan River and cut down some trees to make logs to build a new meeting place." So Elisha said, "Very well, go."

³One of them said to Elisha, "Please come with us." So Elisha replied, "Very well, I will go with you."

⁴So they went together. When they reached the Jordan River they cut down some trees.

⁵But while one of them was cutting down a tree, suddenly the axe head separated from the handle and fell into the water. He cried out to Elisha, "O, Master, what shall I do? The axe is not mine. I borrowed it!"

⁶Elisha replied, "Where did it fall into the water?" After the man showed him the place, Elisha cut off a stick, threw it into the water, and the axe head rose to the water surface. ⁷Elisha said, "Take it out of the water." So the man reached his hand down and picked up the axe head.

⁸Whenever the king of Aram prepared to send his army to fight against Israel, he first consulted his officers, and then told them where they should set up their tents.

⁹But each time Elisha would send a message to warn the king of Israel, telling him where the army of Aram was planning to attack them, saying, "Be sure that your army does not go near that place, because the army of Aram has set up their tents there." ¹⁰So the king of Israel would send messengers to warn the people who lived in that place, and the people would remain on guard. That happened several times.

¹¹The king of Aram was very upset about this, so he summoned his army officers and said to them, "One of you is revealing our plans to the king of Israel. Which one of you is doing it?"

¹²One of his officers answered, "Your Majesty, it is not one of us. Elisha the prophet knows what we plan to do, and he tells the king of Israel everything. He even knows what you say in your own bedroom!"

¹³The king of Aram replied, "Go and find out where he is, and I will send some men there to capture him." Someone told him, "People say that he is in the city of Dothan, north of Samaria." ¹⁴So the king sent a large group of soldiers to Dothan with horses and chariots. They arrived at night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵Early the next morning, Elisha's servant got up and went outside the house. He saw the soldiers of Aram with their horses and chariots surrounding the town. So he went inside the house and reported it to Elisha and exclaimed, "Oh, sir! What are we going to do?"

¹⁶Elisha replied, "Do not be afraid! Those who are helping us are many more than those who are helping them!"

¹⁷Then he prayed, "Yahweh, I request that you open my servant's eyes in order that he can see what is out there!" So Yahweh enabled the servant to look out and see that surrounding the hill on which the town was built was a huge number of horses and chariots; they seemed to be made of fire!

¹⁸When the army of Aram prepared to attack Elisha, he prayed again, saying, "Yahweh, cause all these soldiers to become blind!" Yahweh answered his prayer and caused them to be unable to see clearly.

¹⁹Then Elisha went to them and said, "You are not on the right road. This is not the city that you are searching for. I will take you to the man whom you are searching for." But he led them to the city Samaria, the capital of Israel.

²⁰As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha prayed again, saying, "Yahweh, now enable these soldiers to see correctly again!" So Yahweh enabled them to see correctly, and they were surprised to see that they were inside Samaria.

²¹When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "Sir, shall I tell my soldiers to kill them? Shall we kill all of them?"

²²Elisha replied, "No, you must not kill them. If your army captured many of your enemies in a battle, you would certainly not kill them. Give these men something to eat and drink, and then allow them to return to their king."

²³So the king of Israel did that. He told his servants to provide a big feast for them. And when they had eaten and drunk plenty, he sent them away. They returned to the king of Aram and told him what had happened. So for a while after that, soldiers from Aram stopped raiding towns in Israel.

²⁴But some time later, Ben Hadad the king of Aram, assembled his entire army, and they went to Samaria and surrounded the city for a long time. ²⁵Because of that, after a while there was hardly any food left inside the city, so that eventually a donkey's head, which was usually worthless, cost eighty pieces of silver, and one cup of dove's dung cost five pieces of silver.

²⁶One day when the king of Israel was walking on top of the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Your Majesty, help me!"

²⁷He replied, "If Yahweh will not help you, I certainly cannot. I do not have any wheat or wine!" ²⁸What is your problem?" She replied, "Several days ago, that women over there said to me, 'Because we have nothing left to eat, let us kill your son today, in order that we can eat his flesh. Then tomorrow we can kill my son and eat his flesh.'

²⁹So we killed my son and cut his body up and boiled his flesh and ate it. The next day, I said to her, 'Now give your son to me, in order that we can kill him and cook his flesh and eat it.' But she has hidden her son."

³⁰When the king heard what the woman said, he tore his robe to show that he was very upset. The people who were standing close to the wall were able to see that the king was wearing rough cloth underneath his robe because he was very upset. ³¹The king exclaimed, "I wish that God will strike me dead if I do not cut off the head of Elisha today, because he is the one who has caused these terrible things to happen to us!"

³²So the king sent an officer to get Elisha.

Before the officer arrived, Elisha was sitting in his house with some Israelite elders who were talking with him. Elisha said to them, "That murderer, the king of Israel, is sending someone here to kill me. Listen. When he arrives, shut the door and do not allow him to come in, because the king will be coming right behind that officer!" ³³And while he was still speaking, the king and the officer arrived. The king said, "It is Yahweh who is allowing us to have all this trouble. I will no longer wait for him to help us."

Chapter 7

¹Elisha replied to the king, "Listen to what Yahweh says: 'He says that by this time tomorrow, at the marketplace here in Samaria, you will be able to buy seven liters of the best flour for one piece of silver, and fourteen liters of barley for one piece of silver.'"

²The officer accompanying the king said to Elijah, "That cannot happen! Even if Yahweh himself would open the windows of the sky and send grain down to us, that certainly could not happen!" Elisha replied, "Because you said that, you will see it happen, but you will not be able to eat any of the food!"

³That day there were four men who had leprosy who were sitting outside the gate of the city of Samaria. They said to each other, "Why should we wait here until we die? ⁴If we go into the city, we will die there, because there is no food there. If we remain sitting here, we will die here. So let us go to where the army of Aram has set up their tents. If they kill us, we will die. But if they allow us to remain alive, we will not die." ⁵So when it was getting dark, those four men went to the camp where the army of Aram had set up their tents. But when they reached the camp, they saw that there was no one there.

⁶What had happened was that Yahweh had caused the army of Aram to hear something that sounded like a large army marching with chariots and horses. So the soldiers said to each other, "Listen! The king of Israel has hired the kings of Egypt and the Hittites and their armies, and they have come to attack us!" ⁷So they all ran away that evening at sundown and left their tents and their horses and donkeys there, because they were afraid that they would die if they stayed there.

⁸When those four men with leprosy came to the edge of the area where the soldiers of Aram had set up their tents, they went into one tent and saw all the things that had been left there. So they ate and drank what was there, and they took the silver and the gold and clothes. Then they went outside the tent and hid those things. Then they entered another tent and took things from there, and then went outside and hid them, also.

⁹But then they said to each other, "We are not doing what is right. We have good news to tell others today. If we do not tell it to anyone now, and if we wait until morning to tell it, the people will certainly punish us. So let us go right now to the palace and tell it to the king's officials!"

¹⁰So they went to the guards at the city gates and called out to them, "We went to where the army of Aram had set up their tents, but we did not see or hear anyone there. Their horses and donkeys were still tied up, but their tents were all deserted!" ¹¹The guards shouted the news, and some people who heard it went to the palace and reported it there.

¹²It was in the night that the king heard this news. He got up out of his bed and said to his officials, "I will tell you what the army of Aram is planning to do. They know that we have no food here, so they have left their tents and are hiding in the fields. They think that we will leave the city to find some food, and then they will capture us and capture the city."

¹³But one of his officials said, "Many of our people have already died from hunger. If those of us who are still alive all stay here, we also will die anyway. So let us send some men with five of our horses that are still alive to go and see what has really happened."

¹⁴So they chose some men and told them to go in two chariots and find out what had happened to the army of Aram. ¹⁵They went as far as the Jordan River. All along the road they saw clothes and equipment that the soldiers from Aram had thrown away while they were running away. So the men returned to the king and reported what they had seen. ¹⁶Then many of the people of Samaria also went out of the city and went to where the army of Aram had set up their tents. They entered all the tents and took everything. So there was now plenty of everything! As a result people could buy seven liters of the best flour for one piece of silver, and fourteen liters of barley for one piece of silver, which was what Yahweh had said would happen!

¹⁷The king of Israel had ordered his assistant, the one who had spoken with Elisha, to supervise what was happening at the city gate. But as he was standing at the gate, all the people who were rushing outside the city trampled on him, and he died, which was what Elisha had said would happen to him. ¹⁸Elisha had told to the king that by the next day there would be plenty of food, with the result that anyone could buy fourteen liters of barley for one piece of silver, and seven liters of the best flour for one piece of silver.

¹⁹That officer had answered, "That certainly cannot happen! Even if Yahweh himself would open the sky and send down some grain, that could not happen." And Elisha had replied, "Because you said that, you will see it happen, but you will not be able to eat any of the food!" ²⁰And that is what happened to him. The people who were rushing out of the city gate trampled on him, and he died.

Chapter 8

¹After Elisha had caused the son of the woman from the city of Shunem to become alive again, he had told her that she should leave with her family and live somewhere else for a while, because Yahweh was going to send a famine in the land. He said that the famine would last for seven years. ²So the woman had done what Elisha told her to do. She and her family had gone to live in the region of Philistia for seven years.

³After the seven years were ended, they returned to their home. The woman went to the king to request that her house and her land be given back to her. ⁴When she arrived, the king was talking with Gehazi, Elisha's servant. The king was saying to him, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done." ⁵While Gehazi was telling the king that Elisha had caused the son of a woman from Shunem to become alive again, that woman came in and requested the king to enable her to get her house and land back again. Gehazi exclaimed, "Your Majesty, this is the woman whose son Elisha caused to become alive again!"

⁶When the king asked her about it, she told him that what Gehazi had said was true. The king summoned one of his officials and said to him, "Make sure that this woman gets back everything that she owned in the past, including the value of all the crops that have been harvested during these last seven years while she was away from her land." So the official did that.

⁷Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Aram, at the time when Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, was very sick. When someone told the king that Elisha was in Damascus, ⁸the king told one of his officials named Hazael, "Go and talk to that prophet and take a present with you to give to him. Request him to ask Yahweh if I will recover from my illness."

⁹So Hazael went to talk with Elisha. He took with him forty camels that were carrying many kinds of goods that were produced in Damascus. When Hazael met him, he said to him, "Your friend Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, sent me to ask you whether you think he will recover from his illness."

¹⁰Elisha said to Hazael, "Go and say to him, 'Yes, you will certainly not die from this illness,' but Yahweh has shown me that he will certainly die before he recovers." ¹¹Then Elisha stared at him and had a terrified look on his face. That caused Hazael to feel uneasy. Then suddenly Elisha started to cry.

¹²Hazael said, "Sir, why are you crying?"

Elisha replied, "Because Yahweh has enabled me to know the terrible things that you will do to the people of Israel. Your soldiers will burn their cities that now have walls around them, kill their fine young men in battle, crush the heads of their children, and rip open the bellies of their pregnant women with swords."

¹³Hazael replied, "I am as powerless as a dog. How could I do such terrible things?"

Elisha replied, "Yahweh has also revealed to me that you will become the king of Aram."

¹⁴Then Hazael left and returned to his master the king, who asked him, "What did Elisha say?"

He replied, "He told me that you would certainly recover." ¹⁵But the next day, while the king was sleeping, Hazael took a blanket and soaked it in water. Then he spread it on the king's face in order that he could not breathe, and he died. Then Hazael became the king of Aram instead of Ben Hadad.

¹⁶After King Joram son of Ahab, had been ruling in Israel for almost five years, Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became the king of Judah. ¹⁷He was thirty-two years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. ¹⁸His wife was the daughter of King Ahab. Like everyone in Ahab's family, he continually did the evil things that the previous kings of Israel had done. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ¹⁹But Yahweh did not want to get rid of the people of Judah, because of what he had promised David, who served him very well. He had promised David that his descendants would always rule Judah.

²⁰During the time that Jehoram ruled, the king of Edom rebelled against Judah, and they appointed their own king.

²¹So Jehoram went with his army and all their chariots to the city of Zair near the border of Edom. There the army of Edom surrounded them. But during the night, Jehoram and the commanders in their chariots were able to get through the enemy lines and escaped. And all his soldiers also fled to their homes. ²²So after that, Edom was no longer controlled by Judah, and it is still like that. During that same time, the people of the city of Libnah also freed themselves from being controlled by Judah.

²³If you want to read about the other things that Jehoram did, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁴Jehoram died and was buried where the other kings of Judah had been buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then Jehoram's son Ahaziah became the king.

²⁵After Ahab's son Joram has been ruling in Israel for almost twelve years, Jehoram's son Ahaziah became the king of Judah. ²⁶Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he started to rule. He ruled in Jerusalem for only one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of King Ahab and the granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. ²⁷King Ahaziah conducted his life just like the members of Ahab's family had done. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil.

²⁸Ahaziah's army joined the army of King Joram of Israel to fight against the army of King Hazael of Aram. Their armies started fighting at the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead, and the soldiers of Aram wounded Joram.

²⁹King Joram returned to the city of Jezreel in order to recover from his wounds. King Ahaziah went to visit him there.

Chapter 9

¹Meanwhile, the prophet Elisha summoned one of the other prophets. He said to him, "Get ready and go to the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead. Take this jar of olive oil with you. ²When you arrive there, search for a man named Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Go with him into a room away from his companions, ³and pour some of this oil on his head. Then say to him, 'Yahweh declares that he is appointing you to be the king of Israel.' Then open the door and run away as quickly as you can."

⁴So the young prophet went to Ramoth. ⁵When he arrived, he saw that the commanders of the army were having a conference. He looked at Jehu and said, "Sir, I have a message for one of you."

Jehu replied, "Which one of us is the message for?"

The young prophet replied, "It is for you, commander."

⁶So Jehu got up and went with the young prophet into a house. There the young prophet poured some olive oil on Jehu's head and said to him, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares this: 'I am appointing you to be the king of my Israelite people. ⁷You must kill your master King Joram son of Ahab, because I will punish Ahab's wife Jezebel for murdering many of my prophets and other people who served me. ⁸You must kill not only Joram but all of Ahab's family. I want to get rid of every male in the family, including young ones and old ones. ⁹I will get

rid of Ahab's family, like I got rid of the families of two other kings of Israel, Jeroboam and Baasha. ¹⁰And when Jezebel dies, her corpse will not be buried. Dogs will eat her corpse there in the city of Jezreel."

After the young prophet said this, he left the room and ran. ¹¹When Jehu came out of the room to where his other commanders were, they said to him, "Is everything all right? Why did that mad fellow come to you?"

He replied, "You know what kinds of things young prophets like him say."

¹²They said, "You are lying. Tell us what he said!"

He replied, "He told me several things, and then he told me that Yahweh said, 'I am appointing you to be the king of Israel.'"

¹³Then they all spread their cloaks on the steps of the building for Jehu to walk out on, and they blew trumpets and shouted, "Jehu is now the king!"

¹⁴⁻¹⁵King Joram and his army had been defending Ramoth against the attacks by the army of the king of Aram. King Joram had returned to the city of Jezreel, to recover from being wounded in the battle against the army of Hazael, the king of Aram. And Jehu made plans to kill Joram. He said to his other commanders, "If you really want to help me, then make sure that no one leaves this city to go to warn the people of Jezreel about what I am planning to do." ¹⁶Then Jehu and his officers got into their chariots and rode to Jezreel, where Joram was still recovering. And King Ahaziah of Judah was there, visiting Joram.

¹⁷A guard was standing in the watchtower in Jezreel. He saw Jehu and his men approaching. He called out, "I see a lot of men who are approaching!" King Joram heard what the watchman said, so he said to his soldiers, "Send someone on a horse to go and find out if they are coming peacefully or in order to attack us."

¹⁸So a man riding a horse rode out to meet Jehu and said to him, "The king wants to know if you are coming peacefully."

Jehu replied, "This is not the time for you to be concerned about peace! Turn around and come behind me!"

So the guard in the watchtower reported that the messenger had reached the group that was approaching, but he was not returning alone.

¹⁹So King Joram sent another messenger who asked Jehu the same question. Again Jehu replied, "This is not the time for you to be concerned about peace! Turn around and follow me!"

²⁰Then the watchman reported again, "That messenger also reached them, but he is not coming back alone. And the leader of the group must be Jehu son of Nimshi, because he is driving his chariot furiously, as Jehu does!"

²¹Joram said to his soldiers, "Get my chariot ready." So they did that. Then King Joram and King Ahaziah both rode toward Jehu, each one in his own chariot. And it happened that they met Jehu at the field that had previously belonged to Naboth! ²²When Joram met Jehu, he said to him, "Are you coming to act peacefully toward me?"

Jehu replied, "How can there be peace while you and your people are bowing down to idols and practicing very much witchcraft like your mother Jezebel did?"

²³Joram cried out, "Ahaziah, they have deceived us! They want to kill us!" So Joram turned his chariot around and tried to flee.

²⁴But Jehu drew his bow with strength and shot an arrow that pierced Joram between his shoulder blades. The arrow went through Joram's body and pierced Joram's heart, and he slumped down dead in his chariot. ²⁵Then Jehu said to his assistant Bidkar, "Take his corpse and throw it here into the field that belonged to Naboth. I am sure that you remember that when you and I were riding together in chariots behind King Joram's father Ahab that Yahweh said this about Ahab, ²⁶Yesterday I saw Ahab murder Naboth and his sons here. And I solemnly promise that I will

punish him right here in this same field!' So take Joram's corpse and throw it into that field! That will fulfill what Yahweh said would happen."

²⁷When King Ahaziah saw what happened, he fled in his chariot toward the city of Beth Haggan. But Jehu pursued him and said to his other commanders, "Shoot him, also!" So they shot him with arrows while he was riding in his chariot on the road up to Gur, near the city of Ibleam. He continued going in his chariot until he reached the city of Megiddo, where he died. ²⁸His officials took his corpse back to Jerusalem and buried it in the tombs in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors had been buried. ²⁹Ahaziah had become the king of Judah when Joram had been ruling Israel for almost eleven years.

³⁰Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Ahab's widow Jezebel heard what had happened, she put paint on her eyelids, and combed her hair to make it beautiful, and looked out the window of the palace toward the street below.

³¹While Jehu was entering the city gate, she called out to him, "You are like Zimri! You are a murderer just like him! I think you are certainly not coming to act peacefully toward me!"

³²Jehu looked up toward the window, and then he said, "Who is on my side? Anyone?" Two or three palace officials looked down at him from a window. ³³Jehu said to them, "Throw her down here!"

So they threw her down and Jehu ordered that his men drive their chariots and horses over her body, and that is how she was killed. Some of her blood splattered on the city wall and on the horses that were pulling the chariots.

³⁴Then Jehu went into the palace and ate and drank. Then he said to some of his men, "Take the corpse of that woman whom Yahweh has cursed and bury it, because she is a king's daughter and therefore should be buried properly." ³⁵But when they went to get her corpse to bury it, all that was left was only her skull and the bones of her feet and her hands. Everything else was gone. ³⁶When they reported this to Jehu, he said, "That is what Yahweh said would happen! He told his servant Elijah, 'In the city of Jezreel, dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel's corpse. ³⁷Her bones will be scattered there in Jezreel like dung, with the result that no one will be able to recognize them and say, "These are Jezebel's bones."'"

Chapter 10

¹There were seventy descendants of King Ahab who were living in Samaria. Jehu wrote a letter and made copies of it and sent them to the rulers of the city, to the elders, and to those who raised and tutored Ahab's children. ²This is what he wrote: "You are the ones who are taking care of the king's descendants. You have chariots, horses, and weapons, and you live in cities that have walls around them. So as soon as you receive this letter, ³choose one of the king's descendants, the one who is the best qualified, and appoint him to be your king. Then prepare to fight to defend him."

⁴But when they got those letters and read them, they became very afraid. They said, "King Joram and King Ahaziah could not resist him; how can we resist him?"

⁵So the officer who was in charge of the palace and the mayor of the city sent a message to Jehu saying, "We want to serve you, and we are ready to do whatever you tell us to do. We will not appoint anyone to become our king. You do whatever you think is the best."

⁶So Jehu sent a second letter to them, writing this: "If you are on my side, and if you are ready to obey me, kill King Ahab's descendants and cut off their heads and bring their heads to me here in Jezreel at this time tomorrow."

Now the seventy descendants of King Ahab were being brought up and supervised by the leaders of the city of Samaria. ⁷When they received the letter from Jehu, they killed all seventy of Ahab's descendants and cut off their heads. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel. ⁸A messenger came to Jehu and told him, "They have brought the heads of Ahab's descendants." So Jehu commanded that the heads should be put in two piles at the city gate and that the heads should stay there until the next morning.

⁹The next morning he went out to the city gate and said to all the people, "I am the one who plotted against King Joram and killed him. You are not guilty of doing that. But it was Yahweh, not I, who commanded that all these descendants of Ahab should be killed. ¹⁰I want you to know that everything that Yahweh said would happen has happened. He has caused to happen what he told the prophet Elijah would happen." ¹¹Then Jehu executed all the other relatives of Ahab in Jezreel, all Ahab's officers, close friends, and his priests. He did not allow any of them to remain alive.

¹²Then Jehu left Jezreel and went toward Samaria. While he was going there, at a place called Beth Eked, ¹³he met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah. He asked them, "Who are you?"

They replied, "We are relatives of King Ahaziah. We are going to Jezreel to visit the children of Queen Jezebel and the other members of King Joram's family."

¹⁴Jehu said to his men, "Seize them!" So they seized them and killed all of them at the well of Beth Eked. There were forty-two people whom they killed. They did not allow any of them to remain alive.

¹⁵Then Jehu continued to travel toward Samaria. Along the road he was met by Jonadab, a son of Rechab. Jehu greeted him and said to him, "Are you thinking in the same way that I am thinking?"

Jonadab replied, "Yes, I am."

Jehu said, "If you are, join your hand to mine." So Jonadab joined hands with him, and Jehu helped him to get into his chariot. ¹⁶Jehu said to him, "Come with me, and you will see how eager I am to obey Yahweh." So they rode together to Samaria.

¹⁷When they arrived in Samaria, Jehu killed all of Ahab's relatives who were still alive. He did not spare any of them. That was what Yahweh told Elijah would happen.

¹⁸Then Jehu summoned all the people of Samaria, and said to them, "King Ahab was devoted to your god Baal a little bit, but I will serve him much more. ¹⁹So now summon all the prophets of Baal, all of Baal's priests, and all the others who worship Baal. I am going to make a great sacrifice to Baal. I want all of them to be there. Any of them who is not there will be executed." But Jehu was planning to trick them, because he was planning to kill all those who worshiped Baal.

²⁰Then Jehu commanded, "Announce that we are going to set aside a day to honor Baal." So they sent out a proclamation about that day. ²¹Jehu decided what day they would gather and sent messages throughout Israel telling everyone what day to gather, and on that day, everyone who worshiped Baal came. No one stayed at home. They all went into the huge temple of Baal and filled it from one end to the other. ²²Jehu told the priest who took care of the sacred robes to bring them out and give them to the people who worshiped Baal. So the priest did that.

²³Then Jehu went into the temple of Baal with Jonadab, and he said to the people who were there to worship Baal, "Be sure that only those who worship Baal are here. Be sure that no one who worships Yahweh has come in."

²⁴Then he and Jonadab prepared to offer sacrifices and other offerings to Baal that would be burned whole on the altar that was there in Samaria. But Jehu had stationed eighty of his men outside the temple, and had said to them, "I want you to kill all the people who are in the temple. Anyone who allows one of them to escape will be executed!"

²⁵As soon as Jehu and Jonadab had finished killing the animals that would be completely burned to be an offering to Baal, they went outside and said to the guards and officers, "Go in and kill all of them! Do not allow any of them to escape!" So the guards and officers went in and killed them all with their swords. Then they dragged their corpses outside the temple. Then they went into the inner room of the temple, ²⁶and they carried out the sacred pillar of Baal that was there, and they burned it. ²⁷So they destroyed that pillar that honored Baal, and then they burned down the temple, and made it a latrine. And that is what it is up to the present time.

²⁸That is how Jehu got rid of the worship of Baal in Israel. ²⁹But Jehu did not stop committing the kinds of sins that Jeroboam had committed, sins that led the people of Israel to sin by worshipping the gold statues of calves in the cities of Bethel and Dan.

³⁰Then Yahweh said to Jehu, "You have done what pleased me by getting rid of all of Ahab's descendants. So I promise you that your son and grandson and great-grandson and great-great-grandson will all be kings of Israel."

³¹But Jehu did not obey all the laws of Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. He did not stop committing the sins that Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the Israelite people to sin.

³²At that time, Yahweh began to cause the territory controlled by Israel to become smaller. The army of King Hazael of Aram conquered much of the Israelite territory. ³³He conquered the parts east of the Jordan River, as far south as the city of Aroer on the Arnon River. That included the regions of Gilead and Bashan, where the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh lived.

³⁴If you want to read more about all the other things that Jehu did, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵Jehu died, and was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz became the king in place of his father. ³⁶Jehu had ruled in Samaria as the king of Israel for twenty-eight years.

Chapter 11

¹When King Ahaziah's mother Athaliah saw that her son had been killed, she commanded that all the members of Ahaziah's family who might become king must be executed. ²So Ahaziah's sons were all about to be murdered. But Jehosheba, who was King Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's half-sister, took Ahaziah's very young son Joash and hid him and his nursemaid in a bedroom in the temple. So he was not killed. ³He stayed with Jehosheba for six years. All during that time, he remained hidden in the temple, while Athaliah ruled Judah.

⁴Six years later, Jehoiada the high priest summoned the officers who supervised the royal bodyguards and the palace guards. He told them to come to the temple. There he required them to solemnly promise that they would do what he told them to do. And he showed King Ahaziah's son Joash to them. ⁵He gave them these instructions: "There are three groups of you guards. When one group finishes their work on the Sabbath day, divide yourselves into three smaller groups. One group must guard the palace. ⁶Another group must guard at the Sur Gate. The other group must guard at the gate behind the other groups. ⁷The two groups that are not working on the Sabbath day must guard the temple to protect little King Joash. ⁸You must stand around the king wherever he goes, with your weapons in your hands. You must kill anyone who comes near you."

⁹The officers who supervised the guards did what Jehoiada told them to do. Each one brought to Jehoiada the guards that he supervised—the guards who were just finishing their work and those who were about to start their work on the Sabbath day. ¹⁰The priest distributed to the commanders of the guards the spears and shields that had belonged to King David, that were kept in the temple. ¹¹Then he commanded all the guards to stand in their positions, each one with his sword in his hand, all around the king.

¹²Then he brought Joash out. He put the crown on his head and gave him a scroll on which were written the rules that the kings needed to obey. Then he poured some olive oil on Joash's head and proclaimed that he was now the king. The people all clapped their hands and shouted, "We desire that the king will live for many years!"

¹³When Athaliah heard the noise that was being made by the guards and the other people, she ran to the temple where the people were gathered. ¹⁴She saw the new king standing there alongside one of the big pillars, which was the place at the temple where the kings usually stood. She saw that he was surrounded by the temple officers and men blowing trumpets, and that the people were shouting joyfully, and some of them were also blowing trumpets. She tore her clothes to show her distress and shouted, "You are traitors! You have betrayed me!"

¹⁵Jehoiada immediately said, "Kill her, but do not do it here at the temple of Yahweh! Take her away between two

rows of guards. And kill anyone who tries to rescue her!" ¹⁶She tried to flee, but the guards seized her and took her to the palace, to the place where horses enter the courtyard. They killed her there.

¹⁷Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the king and the people, that they would always obey Yahweh. He also made an covenant requiring the people to be loyal to Joash their king. ¹⁸Then all the people of Israel who were there went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and the statues of Baal. They also killed Mattan the priest of Baal, in front of the altars.

Jehoiada stationed guards at the temple of Yahweh. ¹⁹Then he and the officers of the temple, the officers who supervised the royal bodyguards, and the king's bodyguards brought the king from the temple to the palace. All the people followed them. Joash entered the palace at the Guard Gate and sat down on the throne, where the kings had always sat. ²⁰All the people of Judah rejoiced. And because Athaliah had been killed, the city was quiet.

²¹Joash was seven years old when he became the king of Judah.

Chapter 12

¹When Jehu had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, Joash became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for forty years. His mother was Zibiah, from the city of Beersheba. ²All during the time that Joash was alive, he did what pleased Yahweh, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him. ³But the places where the people worshiped Yahweh elsewhere in the land were not destroyed. They continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places, instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem.

⁴Joash said to the priests, "You must take all the money which the people give, both the money they are required to pay and the money that they themselves decide to give, as sacred offerings to buy things for the temple. ⁵Each priest must take the money from the people who come to him, and he must use that money to repair the temple whenever he sees that there is something that needs to be repaired."

⁶But after Joash had been ruling for almost twenty-three years, the priests still had not repaired anything in the temple. ⁷So Joash summoned Jehoiada and the other priests and said to them, "Why are you not repairing things in the temple? Do not take any more money from those who are paying taxes. Take the money that was collected for the purpose of repairing the temple and pay that money to the workers who will do the repairs." ⁸The priests agreed to do that, and they also agreed that they themselves would not do the repair work.

⁹Then Jehoiada took a chest and bored a hole in the lid. He placed it alongside the altar for burning incense that was on the right as anyone enters the temple. The priests who guarded the entrance to the temple put in the box the money that was brought to the temple. ¹⁰Whenever they saw that there was a lot of money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest would come and count the money. Then they would put it in bags and tie the bags shut. ¹¹Then they would distribute the money to the men who supervised the work in the temple. The supervisors would use that money to pay the carpenters and builders who did the repair work in the temple, ¹²and the masons and the stone cutters. Also with some of that money they bought timber and stones that had been cut to be used in the repair work, and to pay all the other expenses for the repair work. ¹³But they did not use any of that money to pay men to make silver cups or wick trimmers for the lamps or bowls or trumpets or any other items made of silver or gold to be used in the temple.

¹⁴All that money was given to the men who were doing the work of repairing the temple. ¹⁵The men who supervised the work always did things honestly, so the king's secretary and the high priest never required that the supervisors report what they had spent the money for. ¹⁶But the money that people gave to pay for sacrifices for their sins was not put in the chest. That money belonged to the priests.

¹⁷At that time, Hazael, the king of Aram, went with his army and attacked the city of Gath and conquered it. Then he decided that they would attack Jerusalem. ¹⁸So Joash, the king of Judah, took all the money that the previous kings, Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, had dedicated to Yahweh. He added some of his own money, and all

the gold that was in the rooms in the temple where valuable things were kept, and he sent it all to King Hazael to persuade him not to attack Jerusalem. So King Hazael took his army away from Jerusalem.

¹⁹If you want to read more of what Joash did, it is all written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰⁻²¹Joash's officials plotted against him, and two of them killed Joash on the road that goes down to the district of Silla. The two men who did that were Jozabad son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad son of Shomer. Joash was buried in the place where his ancestors were buried, in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then Joash's son Amaziah became the king of Judah.

Chapter 13

¹After Joash had been ruling Judah for almost twenty-three years, Jehu's son Jehoahaz became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for seventeen years. ²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil and committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam had committed, sins that had induced the people of Israel to sin. He did not stop committing those sins. ³So Yahweh became very angry with the Israelite people, and he allowed the army of King Hazael of Aram and his son Ben Hadad to defeat the Israelites many times.

⁴Then Jehoahaz prayed to Yahweh for help, and Yahweh listened to him, because he saw that the army of the king of Aram was oppressing the Israelites. ⁵Yahweh sent a leader to Israel, who enabled them to be free from Aram's power. After that, the Israelites lived peacefully as they had done previously. ⁶But they still continued to commit the same kind of sins that Jeroboam and his family had committed and that had led the Israelites to sin. Also, the statue of the goddess Asherah remained in Samaria.

⁷Jehoahaz had only fifty men who rode on horses and ten chariots and ten thousand other soldiers, because the army of Aram had killed all the rest, walking over them as people walk over the ground.

⁸If you want to read about everything else that Jehoahaz did, you can read about it in the book called The History of the Kings of Israel. ⁹Jehoahaz died and was buried in Samaria. Then his son Jehoash became the king.

¹⁰Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, started to rule in Israel after King Joash had been ruling in Judah for thirty-seven years. Jehoash ruled in Samaria for sixteen years. ¹¹He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He refused to stop worshipping idols, which was the sin that many years earlier King Jeroboam had led the Israelite people in committing.

¹²The other things that happened while Jehoash was king and all the things that he did are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. In that account they wrote about his army's victories, and their war with the army of King Amaziah of Judah. ¹³When Jehoash died, he was buried in Samaria where the other kings of Israel were buried. Then his son Jeroboam became king.

¹⁴Then Elisha became very ill. Just before he died, King Joash went to Elisha and cried in front of him. Saying the same words that Elisha had said when Elijah was taken to heaven, he said, "My father! The chariots of us Israelite people and their drivers are taking my master away!"

¹⁵Elisha said to him, "Bring to me a bow and some arrows!" So the king did that. ¹⁶Then Elisha told the king to put his hands on the bow and prepare to shoot some arrows. And then Elisha put his own hands on the king's hands.

¹⁷Then Elisha told him, "Have someone open that window toward the east." So a servant opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" So the king did. Then Elisha said, "That is the arrow that indicates that your army will defeat the Aramean army. Your army will completely defeat their army at the city of Aphek."

¹⁸Then Elisha said, "Pick up the other arrows and strike the ground with them!" So the king picked up the arrows and struck the ground three times. ¹⁹But Elisha was angry with him. He exclaimed, "You should have struck the ground five or six times! If you had done that, your army would have defeated the Aramean army until they were

completely wiped out! But now, because you struck the ground only three times, your army will defeat them only three times!"

²⁰Then Elisha died and was buried.

Groups of raiders from Moab came to Israel each year during spring. ²¹One year, when some Israelite people were burying a man's body, they saw a group of those raiders. They were afraid, so quickly they threw that man's body into the grave where Elisha had been buried, and they ran away.

But as soon as the man's body touched Elisha's bones, the dead man became alive again and jumped up!

²²King Hazael of Aram sent soldiers to oppress the Israelite people during all the years that Jehoahaz ruled Judah.

²³But Yahweh was very kind to the Israelite people. He helped them because of the covenant that he had made with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would not get rid of the Israelites, and he still has not rejected them.

²⁴When Hazael the king of Aram died, his son Ben Hadad became the king. ²⁵The army of King Jehoash of Israel defeated the army of King Ben Hadad three times; they also recaptured the cities that Ben Hadad's army had seized during the time that Jehoash's father Jehoahaz was ruling Israel.

Chapter 14

¹After Jehoash had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Joash's son Amaziah became the king of Judah. ²He was twenty-five years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Jehoaddin. She was from Jerusalem. ³Amaziah did many things that pleased Yahweh, but he did not do as many things that pleased Yahweh as King David had done. He did some of the good things that his father Joash had done. ⁴But, like his father, he did not tear down the other places for worshiping Yahweh. The people continued to burn incense to honor Yahweh in those places instead of in Jerusalem, the place that Yahweh had appointed.

⁵As soon as he was completely in control of his kingdom, he made his servants execute the officials who had murdered his father. ⁶But he did not tell his servants to execute those officials' children. He obeyed what was written in the laws that God gave to Moses, "Parents must not be executed for the crimes committed by their parents. People must be executed only for the sins that they themselves have committed."

⁷Amaziah's soldiers killed ten thousand soldiers of the Edom people group in the Valley of Salt south of the Dead Sea, and they captured the city of Sela and gave it a new name, Joktheel. That is still its name.

⁸Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash of Israel, saying, "Come here and let us and our armies fight each other in battle."

⁹But King Jehoash replied with this parable to King Amaziah: "Once a thornbush growing in the mountains in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar tree, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in order that he may marry her.' But a wild animal in Lebanon passed by the thornbush and trampled it." ¹⁰The meaning of what I am saying is that your army has defeated the army of Edom, so now you have become very proud. But you should be content with defeating the people of Edom; you should allow your soldiers to stay at home. If you cause trouble by fighting against us, you will surely cause a disaster to happen to you and to your people."

¹¹But Amaziah refused to pay attention to Jehoash's message. So Jehoash and Amaziah led their armies to Beth Shemesh in Judah, and it was there that their armies came together to fight each other. ¹²The Israelite army defeated the army of Judah, and all the soldiers of Judah fled and ran back home. ¹³Jehoash's army also captured King Amaziah there, and they also marched to Jerusalem and tore down the wall that was around the city, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. That was a section of wall about 180 meters long. ¹⁴Jehoash's soldiers seized all the gold and silver that they found, all the objects that were in the temple, and all the valuable things that were in

the palace; they took them to Samaria. They also took to Samaria some prisoners to make sure that Amaziah would cause them no more trouble.

¹⁵If you want to know about all the other things that Jehoash did when he was king, including when he and his army fought against the army of King Amaziah of Judah, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁶Jehoash died, and he was buried in Samaria, where the other kings of Israel had been buried. Then his son Jeroboam became the king.

¹⁷Amaziah, the king of Judah, lived for fifteen more years after Jehoash, the king of Israel, died. ¹⁸If you want to know more about everything else that Amaziah did, it is written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁹Some people in Jerusalem plotted against him, so he fled to the city of Lachish. But they followed him there and killed him. ²⁰They took his corpse back to Jerusalem and buried it where his ancestors had been buried, in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David.

²¹Then all the people of Judah appointed Azariah, whose father was Amaziah, to be their king. He became king when he was sixteen years. ²²After Amaziah's father Amaziah died, Azariah's army captured the city of Elath, and it came under the control of Judah again.

²³When Amaziah had been ruling Judah for almost fifteen years, Jeroboam became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for forty-one years. ²⁴He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not stop committing the same kind of sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat, had committed, sins that had induced the Israelite people to sin also. ²⁵Jeroboam's soldiers conquered again some of the territory that had previously belonged to Israel, from the city of Hamath in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. That is what Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped, promised the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, from the city of Gath Hepher, would happen.

²⁶That happened because Yahweh saw that the Israelites' enemies were causing the Israelites to suffer very much. And there was absolutely no one who would help them. ²⁷But Yahweh said that he would not destroy Israel completely, so he enabled King Jeroboam to rescue them.

²⁸If you want to know more about everything else that Jeroboam did, about how he courageously fought in battle, and about how he enabled the Israelites to capture again the cities of Damascus and Hamath, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ²⁹Jeroboam died, and was buried where the other kings of Israel were buried, and his son Zechariah became the king.

Chapter 15

¹After Jeroboam had been ruling Israel for almost twenty-seven years, Azariah, son of Amaziah king of Judah, began to rule. ²He was sixteen years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. His mother was Jecoliah. She was from Jerusalem. ³He did things that Yahweh was pleased with, as his father Amaziah had done. ⁴But the high places where the people continued to practice idolatry were not destroyed. They continued to burn incense as they worshiped their idols.

⁵Yahweh caused Azariah to become a leper. Azariah was a leper all the remaining years that he lived. He was not allowed to live in the palace. He lived alone in a house, and his son Jotham ruled the land.

⁶If you want to know about everything else that Azariah did, it is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ⁷Azariah died and they buried him in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors had been buried. Then his son Jotham became the king.

⁸After Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-eight years, Zechariah son of Jeroboam, became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for only six months. ⁹He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, like his

ancestors had done. He committed the same kind of sins that the first Jeroboam had committed, sins that had induced the Israelite people to sin.

¹⁰Then Shallum son of Jabesh, made plans to assassinate Zechariah. He killed him in the city of Ibleam, and then he became the king. ¹¹Everything else that Zechariah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

¹²When Zechariah died, the dynasty of King Jehu was finished. This fulfilled what Yahweh said to King Jehu would happen, "Your son and grandson and great-grandson and great-great-grandson will all be kings of Israel."

¹³Shallum son of Jabesh, became the king of Israel after King Amaziah had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-nine years. But Shallum ruled in Samaria for only one month. ¹⁴Then Menahem son of Gadi, went up from the city of Tirzah to Samaria and assassinated Shallum. Then Menahem became the king of Israel.

¹⁵Everything else that Shallum did, including his killing King Zechariah, is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶At that time Menahem completely destroyed the city of Tiphseh and killed all the people who lived there and in the surrounding territory from Tirzah on. He did that because the people in the city refused to surrender to him. With his sword he even ripped open the bellies of pregnant women who lived there.

¹⁷When King Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-nine years, Menahem son of Gadi, became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for ten years. ¹⁸He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He committed the same kind of sins that King Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the people of Israel to sin. He continued to commit those sins all during the years that he lived.

¹⁹Then Pul (also known as Tiglath-Pileser) king of Assyria came with his army to attack Israel. So Menahem gave him about thirty-three metric tons of silver in order that the king of Assyria would help Menahem to continue to be king and rule his country more strongly. ²⁰Menahem obtained that money from the rich men in Israel. He compelled each of them to contribute three-fifths of a kilogram of silver. So Tiglath-Pileser took that money and went back home.

²¹If you want to know more about everything that Menahem did, it is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ²²Menahem died and was buried, and his son Pekahiah became the king of Israel.

²³When King Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost fifty years, Menahem's son Pekahiah became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for only two years. ²⁴He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He committed the same kind of sins that King Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the people of Israel to sin. ²⁵Then one of Pekahiah's army commanders whose name was Pekah son of Remaliah, planned with fifty men, from the region of Gilead to kill Pekahiah and two of his assistants, Argob and Arieah. They assassinated the king in a fortified place in the king's palace in Samaria. Then Pekah became the king.

²⁶Everything else that Pekahiah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷When King Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost fifty-two years, Pekah son of Remaliah, became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for twenty years. ²⁸He also did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He committed the same kind of sins that King Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the people of Israel to sin.

²⁹While Pekah was the king, Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, came with his army and captured the cities of Ijon, Abel of Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, and the regions of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali. His army forced the Israelite people to leave their country and go to live in Assyria.

³⁰Then Hoshea son of Elah, planned to kill Pekah. He assassinated him when Amaziah's son Jotham had been ruling Judah for almost twenty years. Then Hoshea became the king of Israel.

³¹Everything else that Pekah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

³²When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Azariah's son Jotham began to rule Judah. ³³He was twenty-five years old when he started to rule, and he ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. His mother was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. ³⁴He did many things that pleased Yahweh, as his father Azariah had done. ³⁵But he did not destroy the places where the people worshiped Yahweh, and the people continued to burn incense there to honor Yahweh. Jotham's workers built the Upper Gate of the temple.

³⁶If you want to know more about everything else that Jotham did, it is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ³⁷It was during the time that Jotham was the king that Yahweh sent King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel with their armies to attack Judah. ³⁸Jotham died and was buried where his ancestors had been buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Ahaz became the king of Judah.

Chapter 16

¹When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost seventeen years, Ahaz son of Jotham, became the king of Judah. ²He was twenty years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. He did not do things that pleased Yahweh his God, good things like his ancestor King David had done. ³Instead, he was as sinful as the kings of Israel had been. He even sacrificed his son to be an offering to idols. That imitated the disgusting things that the people who previously lived there had done, people whom Yahweh had driven out as the Israelites were advancing through the land. ⁴He offered sacrifices and burned incense to honor Yahweh at many different places, including on the tops of many hills and under many big trees, instead of in Jerusalem as Yahweh had commanded.

⁵Then King Rezin of Aram, came along with his army, and at that time Pekah (who was the son of King Remaliah of Israel) also came along with his army, and together their armies came up to attack Jerusalem, but King Ahaz led a fight to defend the city. The armies surrounded the city, but they could not conquer it. ⁶It was at that time that the army that was commanded by King Rezin of Aram drove out the people of Judah who were living in the city of Elath, and the city came under the control of the Arameans. This was the time when some people from Aram began to live in Elath, and they are still living there.

⁷King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria, to tell this message to him: "I promise that I will completely do what you tell me to do, as though I were your son. Please come and rescue us from the armies of Aram and Israel who are attacking my country." ⁸Ahaz took the silver and gold that was in the palace and in the temple and sent it to Assyria to be a present for the king of Assyria. ⁹So Tiglath-Pileser did what Ahaz requested. His army marched to Damascus and captured it, and they took the people of Damascus as prisoners to live in the capital city of Assyria.

¹⁰When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-Pileser, he saw the altar that was there. So he sent to Uriah, the high priest in Jerusalem, a drawing of the altar and a model that represented exactly the altar in Damascus. ¹¹So Uriah built an altar in Jerusalem following the drawing that King Ahaz had sent. Uriah finished the altar before Ahaz returned to Jerusalem from Damascus. ¹²When the king returned from Damascus, he saw the altar. ¹³He went up to it and burned animal sacrifices and a flour offering on it. He also poured a wine offering on it and threw on it the blood of the offerings to promise friendship with God. ¹⁴The old bronze altar that had been dedicated long ago to Yahweh was between the new altar and the temple, so Ahaz moved it to the north side of his new altar.

¹⁵Then King Ahaz ordered Uriah: "Each morning put on this new altar the sacrifices that the priests will burn completely, and in the evening put on it the flour offering, along with my offering and the offerings that the people bring, ones that they will burn completely, and my flour offering and the people's grain and wine offerings. Pour against the sides of the altar the blood of all the animals that are sacrificed. But the old bronze altar will be only for me to use for divination." ¹⁶So Uriah did what the king commanded him to do.

¹⁷King Ahaz told his workers to take off the frames of the carts that were outside the temple and to take down the basins that were on them. They also took down the large bronze tank called “The Sea” and removed it from the backs of the bronze statues of the oxen and put it on a stone foundation. ¹⁸Then to please the king of Assyria, Ahaz had them remove from the temple the roof under which the people walked into the temple on the Sabbath day, and closed up the private entrance into the temple for the kings of Judah.

¹⁹If you want to know about the other things that Ahaz did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰Ahaz died, and he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors had been buried. Then his son Hezekiah became the king.

Chapter 17

¹Elah’s son Hoshea began to rule Israel after King Ahaz had ruled Judah for twelve years. Hoshea ruled in Samaria for nine years. ²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, but he did not do as many evil things as the previous kings of Israel had done—the ones who had ruled Israel previously.

³The army of King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked and defeated the army of King Hoshea. As a result, the Israelites were forced to pay much tribute to Assyria each year. ⁴But several years later, Hoshea secretly planned to rebel against the rulers of Assyria. He sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, asking if his army could help the Israelites fight against Assyria. Hoshea also stopped paying the tribute that he had been paying Assyria every year. But the king of Assyria found out about those things, so he told his officers to put Hoshea in prison. ⁵Then he brought the army of Assyria to Israel, and they attacked everywhere in that land. His army besieged the city of Samaria for three years. ⁶Finally, after King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for nine years, the army of Assyria forcefully entered the city and captured the people. They took the Israelite people to Assyria and forced some of them to live in the city of Halah. They forced others to live near the Habor River in the district of Gozan. They forced others to live in the towns where the Mede people group lived.

⁷Those things happened because the Israelite people had sinned against Yahweh their God. He had rescued their ancestors from the power of the king of Egypt and brought them safely out of Egypt, but later they began to worship other gods. ⁸They imitated the things that the pagan peoples around them practiced. Those were the very peoples that Yahweh had driven out as the Israelites occupied their land. The people of Israel also did the evil things that most of the kings of Israel showed them. ⁹The Israelite people also secretly did many things that were not pleasing to Yahweh their God. They built places to worship their idols on the hills around all their cities, including small towns and big cities with walls around them. ¹⁰They set up stone pillars to honor gods, and poles to worship the goddess Asherah at the top of every high hill and under every big tree. ¹¹The Israelites burned incense in every place where they worshiped those gods, just like the peoples who lived there previously had done—the groups that Yahweh had driven out from the land. The Israelites did many wicked things that caused Yahweh to become angry. ¹²Yahweh warned them many times that they should not worship idols, but they did it anyway. ¹³Yahweh frequently sent his prophets and seers to warn the people of Israel and the people of Judah. The message that Yahweh gave them was, “Stop doing all the evil things you have been doing. Obey my commands and my laws, the laws that I told your ancestors to obey and that I told the prophets who served me to tell to you again.”

¹⁴But the Israelite people would not pay attention. They were stubborn, just as their ancestors were. Just as their ancestors did, they refused to trust in Yahweh their God. ¹⁵They rejected Yahweh’s laws and the covenant that he had made with their ancestors. They ignored Yahweh’s warnings. They worshiped worthless idols and as a result they themselves became worthless. Although Yahweh had commanded them not to imitate the behavior of the peoples that lived near them, they disobeyed that command.

¹⁶The Israelite people disobeyed all of Yahweh’s commands. They made two metal calves to worship. They set up two poles to worship the goddess Asherah, and they worshiped the god Baal, and the sun, the moon, and the stars. ¹⁷They also burned their own sons and daughters to be sacrifices to those gods. They went to fortune tellers

and they practiced sorcery. They continually chose to do all kinds of evil things that caused Yahweh to become angry.

¹⁸So because Yahweh was very angry with the Israelite people, he allowed their enemies to take them away from their country. Only the people of the tribe of Judah were left in the land. ¹⁹But even the people of Judah did not obey the commands of Yahweh their God. They imitated the evil customs that the Israelites had introduced. ²⁰So Yahweh rejected all the people of Israel and of Judah. He punished them by allowing the armies of other nations to defeat them and take them away. He got rid of all of them.

²¹Earlier, when Yahweh had forced the ten tribes of Israel away from the rule of David's descendants, those tribes had chosen Jeroboam son of Nebat, to be their king. Then Jeroboam enticed the people of Israel to stop worshiping Yahweh and to worship idols instead. He induced them to commit great sins. ²²And the Israelite people continued to do the evil things that Jeroboam introduced. They did not turn away from those sins, ²³so finally Yahweh got rid of them. That was just what his prophets had warned would happen. The Israelite people were taken away to the land of Assyria, and they are still there.

²⁴The king of Assyria ordered his soldiers to take groups of people from the cities of Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to the region of Samaria, and to resettle them in the cities there, to take the place of the Israelites who lived there previously. Those people took control over Samaria and lived in the cities of Samaria.

²⁵But those people who came from other countries did not worship Yahweh when they first arrived in Samaria. So Yahweh sent lions to kill some of them. ²⁶Then those people sent a message to the king of Assyria. They wrote, "We people who have resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know how to worship the God that the Israelites worshiped in this land. So he has sent lions among us to kill us, because we have not worshiped him correctly."

²⁷When the king of Assyria read this letter, he commanded his officers, "Send one of the priests whom you brought here from Samaria to go back there. Tell him to teach the people who are now living there how to worship correctly the God whom the Israelites worshiped in that land." ²⁸So the officers did that. They sent one of the Israelite priests back to Samaria. That priest went to live in the city of Bethel, and he taught the people there how to worship Yahweh.

²⁹But all those people continued to make their own idols. They took their idols and placed them in the houses that the Samaritan people had built upon the hills all around. Each group of people made their own gods that they worshiped, and each of the gods had a name. ³⁰The people from Babylon made idols to represent their god Succoth Benoth. The people from Kuthah made idols to represent their god Nergal. The people from Hamath made idols to represent their god Ashima. ³¹The people from Avva made idols to represent their gods Nibhaz and Tartak. The people from Sepharvaim sacrificed their own children. They completely burned them on altars to be offerings to their gods Adrammelek and Anammelek. ³²But those people also worshiped Yahweh, but they also appointed from among their own groups many people to be priests at the places where idols were worshiped on the hills, and these priests could would offer sacrifices for them upon the high places.

³³So they revered Yahweh, but they also worshiped their own gods, just as their people living in their home countries did. ³⁴These people in Samaria still keep their old customs. They really do not worship Yahweh, and they do not obey all the laws and decrees that Yahweh gave to the descendants of Jacob, to whom he gave the new name Israel. ³⁵Yahweh had previously made an covenant with the ancestors of Israel, commanding them not to worship other gods or bow down to honor them or do other things to please them or offer sacrifices to them. ³⁶He had said to them, "You must have a sincere respect for me, Yahweh, the one who brought you out of Egypt with my very great power. I am the one whom you must bow down to honor, and I am the one to whom you must offer sacrifices. ³⁷You must always obey the laws and decrees that I told Moses to write for you. You must not worship other gods. ³⁸And you must not forget the covenant that I made with your ancestors. You must not fear or respect other gods. ³⁹Instead, you must have a sincere respect for me, Yahweh, your God. If you do that, I will rescue you from the power of all your enemies."

⁴⁰But, the Israelites refused to pay attention to what Yahweh said. Instead, they continued to adhere to their old customs. ⁴¹So, those people worshiped Yahweh, but they also worshiped their idols. And their descendants still do the same thing.

Chapter 18

¹After King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost three years, Hezekiah son of Ahaz, began to rule Judah. ²He was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah and he ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of a man whose name was Zechariah. ³Hezekiah did things that Yahweh said are right, like his ancestor King David had done. ⁴He destroyed the places where people worshiped Yahweh, and he broke into pieces the poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah. He also broke into pieces the bronze replica of a snake that Moses had made. He did that because the people had named it Nehushtan, and they were burning incense in front of it to honor it.

⁵Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped. There was no king who ruled Judah before him or after him who was as devoted to Yahweh as he was. ⁶He remained loyal to Yahweh and never disobeyed him. He carefully obeyed all the commandments that Yahweh had given to Moses. ⁷Yahweh always helped Hezekiah. He was successful in everything he did. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to do what the king of Assyria wanted him to do. ⁸His army defeated the soldiers of Philistia as far south as the city of Gaza and the nearby villages. They conquered the entire area, from the smallest village with only a watchtower to the largest cities surrounded by walls.

⁹After King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years, and when King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, the army of King Shalmaneser of Assyria invaded Israel and surrounded the city of Samaria.

¹⁰In the third year they captured the city. That was when Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost six years, and when Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost nine years. ¹¹The king of Assyria commanded that the people of Israel be taken to Assyria. Some of them were taken to the city of Halah, some were taken to a place near the Habor River in the region of Gozan, and some were taken to cities where the Mede people group live. ¹²That happened because the Israelites did not obey Yahweh their God. They had disobeyed the covenant that Yahweh had made with their ancestors, and all the laws that Moses, the man who served Yahweh very well, had told them to obey. They would not obey those laws. They would not even listen to them.

¹³After King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost fourteen years, the army of King Sennacherib of Assyria attacked all the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They did not capture Jerusalem, but they captured all the other cities. ¹⁴King Hezekiah sent a message to Sennacherib, while Sennacherib was in the city of Lachish, saying, "What I have done was wrong. Please tell your soldiers to stop attacking us. If you do that, I will pay you whatever you tell me to." So the king of Assyria said that Hezekiah must pay to him 10,000 kilograms (or about ten metric tons) of silver and 1,000 kilograms (about one metric ton) of gold.

¹⁵So Hezekiah gave to him all the silver that was in the temple and that was stored in his palace.

¹⁶Hezekiah's men also stripped the gold from the doors of the temple and the gold that he himself had put on the doorposts, and he sent all that gold to the king of Assyria. ¹⁷But the king of Assyria sent a large army with some of his important officials from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they stood alongside the aqueduct in which water flows from the upper pool into Jerusalem, near the road to the field where the women wash clothes. ¹⁸They sent a message requesting King Hezekiah to come to them, but the king sent three of his officials to talk to them. He sent Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who supervised the palace, Shebna, the official secretary, and Asaph's son Joah, who communicated the king's messages to the people.

¹⁹One of Sennacherib's important officials told them to take this message to Hezekiah:

"This is what the king of Assyria, the great king, says: 'What are you trusting in to rescue you?' ²⁰You say that you have weapons to fight us and that some country has promised to help you, but that is only talk. Who do you think

will help you to rebel against my soldiers from Assyria? ²¹Listen to me! You are relying on the army of Egypt. But that is like using a broken reed for a walking stick on which you could lean. It would pierce the hand of anyone who would lean on it! That is what the king of Egypt would be like for anyone who relied on him for help. ²²But perhaps you will say to me, "No, we are relying on Yahweh our God to help us." I would reply, "Is he not the one whom you insulted by tearing down his houses on the hills where the idols were worshiped and the altars on which you offered sacrifices, forcing everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to worship only in front of the altar in Jerusalem?"

²³So I suggest that you make a deal between you and my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, but I do not think that you are able to find two thousand of your men who can ride on them! ²⁴You are hoping that the king of Egypt will send chariots and men riding horses to assist you. But they certainly would not be able to defeat even the most unimportant official in my army! ²⁵Furthermore, do you think that we have come to destroy Jerusalem without Yahweh's help? It is Yahweh himself who told us to come here and destroy this land!"

²⁶Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the official from Assyria, "Sir, please speak to us in your Aramaic language, because we understand it. Do not speak to us in our Hebrew language, because the people who are standing on the wall will understand it and be frightened."

²⁷But the official replied, "Do you think that my master sent me to say these things only to you and not to the people who are standing on the wall? If you reject this message, the people in this city will soon need to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, just like you will, because there will be nothing more for you to eat or drink."

²⁸Then the official stood up and shouted in the Hebrew language to the people sitting on the wall. He said, "Listen this message from the great king, the king of Assyria. He says this: ²⁹'Do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you. He will not be able to rescue you from my power. ³⁰Do not allow him to persuade you to rely on Yahweh, saying that Yahweh will rescue you, and that the army of Assyria will never capture this city!'

³¹Do not pay attention to what Hezekiah says! This is what the king of Assyria says: 'Come out of the city and surrender to me. If you do that, I will arrange for each of you to drink the juice from your own grapevines, and to eat figs from your own trees, and to drink water from your own wells. ³²You will be able to do that until we come and take you to a land that is like your land—a land where there is grain to make bread and vineyards to produce grapes for making wine. It will be a land that has plenty of olive trees and honey.' If you do what the king of Assyria commands, you will not die. You will continue to live.

Do not allow Hezekiah to persuade you to trust in Yahweh, saying that he will rescue you! ³³The gods that people of other nations worship have never rescued them from the power of the king of Assyria! ³⁴Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did any of their gods deliver Samaria out of my hand? ³⁵None of these gods kept their people from being destroyed by the king of Assyria. Do you think your God Yahweh, can do any better?

³⁶But the people who were listening were silent. No one said anything, because King Hezekiah had told them, "When the official from Assyria talks to you, do not answer him."

³⁷Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah went back to Hezekiah with their clothes torn because they were extremely distressed, and they told him what the official from Assyria had said.

Chapter 19

¹When King Hezekiah heard what they reported, he tore his clothes and put on clothes made of rough cloth because he was very distressed. Then he went to the temple to ask God what to do. ²Then he summoned Eliakim and Shebna and the older priests, who were also wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, and told them to talk to Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz. ³He said to them to say these things to Isaiah: "King Hezekiah says that this is a day when we have great distress. Other nations are causing us to be insulted and disgraced like a woman who is

about to give birth to a child, but she is not strong enough to do it. ⁴Perhaps Yahweh our God has heard everything that the official from Assyria said. Perhaps he knows that his master, the king of Assyria, sent him to insult the all-powerful God and that Yahweh will punish him for what he said. And Hezekiah requests that you pray for the few of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem."

⁵When the messengers from Hezekiah came to Isaiah, and ⁶Isaiah instructed them to go back to their master and tell him what Yahweh says: "Those messengers from the king of Assyria have said evil things about me. But you should not be disturbed because of what they said. ⁷Listen to this: I will cause Sennacherib to hear a rumor that will worry him, that other armies are about to attack his country. So he will return to his own country, and there I will cause him to be assassinated by some men."

⁸The official from Assyria found out that the King of Assyria and his army had left the city of Lachish, and that they were attacking Libnah, which was a nearby city. So the official went there to report to him what had happened in Jerusalem.

⁹Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading his army to attack them. But before King Sennacherib left Libnah to fight against the army from Ethiopia, he sent other messengers to King Hezekiah with a letter. ¹⁰In the letter he wrote this to Hezekiah: "Do not allow your god on whom you are relying to deceive you by promising that my army will never capture Jerusalem. ¹¹You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries. Our armies have completely destroyed them. So do you think that you will escape? ¹²Did the gods of the nations that were about to be destroyed by the armies of the previous kings of Assyria rescue them? Did those gods rescue the people in the region of Gozan or in the cities of Haran and Rezeph in northern Aram? Did they rescue the people of Eden who had been deported to the city of Tel Assar? None of the gods of those cities was able to rescue them. ¹³What happened to the kings of the cities of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, and Ivvah? They are all dead."

¹⁴Hezekiah received the letter that the messengers gave him, and he read it. Then he went up to the temple and spread out the letter in front of Yahweh. ¹⁵Then Hezekiah prayed this: "Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, you are seated on your throne above the statues of creatures with wings, above the sacred chest. Only you are truly God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the sky. ¹⁶So, Yahweh, please listen to what I am saying, and look at what is happening. And listen to what King Sennacherib has said to insult you, the all-powerful God.

¹⁷Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many nations and ruined their lands. ¹⁸And they have thrown the idols of those nations into fires and burned them. But that was not difficult to do, because they were not gods. They were only statues made of wood and stone, idols that were shaped by humans, and that is why they were destroyed easily. ¹⁹So now, Yahweh our God, please rescue us from the power of the king of Assyria, in order that the people in all the kingdoms of the world may know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is truly God."

²⁰Then Isaiah sent this message to Hezekiah to tell him what Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelites belonged, said in response: "I have heard what you prayed to me about Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. ²¹This is what I say to that king:

The people of Jerusalem

despise you and make fun of you.

They wag their heads

to mock you.

²²Who do you think that you were despising and ridiculing?

Who do you think you were shouting at?

Who do you think you were looking at very proudly?

It was I, the holy God whom the Israelites worship.

²³The messengers whom you sent

made fun of me.

You said, 'With my many chariots

I have gone to the highest mountains,

to the highest mountains in Lebanon.

We have cut down its tallest cedar trees

and its best cedar trees.

We have been to the most distant peaks

and to its densest forests.

²⁴We have dug wells in other countries

and drunk water from them.

And by marching through the streams of Egypt,

we dried them all up!

²⁵But I reply, 'Have you never heard that long ago

I planned that those things would happen?

I planned it long ago,

and now I have been causing it to occur.

I planned that your army

would have the power to capture many cities

that were surrounded by high walls,

and cause them to become piles of rubble.

²⁶The people who lived in those cities have no power,

and as a result they became dismayed and discouraged.

They are as frail as plants and grass in the fields,

as frail as grass that grows on the roofs of houses

and is scorched before it can grow tall.

²⁷But I know everything about you.

I know when you are in your house

and when you go outside;

I also know that you are raging against me.

²⁸So, because you have raged against me,
and because I have heard you do this,
it will be as though I will put a hook in your nose,
and I will put an iron bit in your mouth,
in order that I can take you where I want you to go.

I will force you to return to your own country
on the same road on which you came here,
without conquering Jerusalem.'

²⁹Now I say this to Hezekiah:

'This is what will happen to prove that I am telling the truth:

This year and next year you and your people
will be able to harvest only wild grain.

But the following year, you Israelites will be able
to plant grain and harvest it,
and to plant vineyards and eat the grapes.

³⁰The people in Judah who remain alive will prosper
and have many children;
they will be like plants whose roots go deep down into the ground
and which produce much fruit.

³¹There will be many people in Jerusalem
who will remain alive,
because I, Yahweh, commander of the armies,
have planned it to happen.

³²So this is what I, Yahweh, say
about the king of Assyria:

"His armies will not enter this city;
they will not even shoot any arrows into it.
His soldiers will not march outside the city gates carrying shields,
and they will not even build high mounds of earth
against the city walls

to enable them to attack the city.

³³Their king will return to his own country

on the same road on which he came here.

He will not enter this city.

That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!

³⁴I will defend this city and prevent it from being destroyed.

I will do this for the sake of my own reputation

and because of what I promised to King David,

who served me well.”

³⁵That night, an angel from Yahweh went out to where the army of Assyria had put up their tents, and killed 185,000 of their soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw that there were corpses everywhere. ³⁶Then King Sennacherib left and went home to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

³⁷One day, when he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his two sons, Adrammelek and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. Then they escaped and went to the region of Ararat, northwest of Nineveh. And another of Sennacherib’s sons, Esarhaddon, became the king of Assyria.

Chapter 20

¹About that time, Hezekiah became very ill. He thought that he was about to die. Isaiah the prophet came to him and said, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘You should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die, because you are not going to recover from this illness. You are going to die.’”

²Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed this: ³“Yahweh, do not forget that I have always served you faithfully with all my inner being, and I have done things that pleased you.” Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly.

⁴Isaiah left the king, but before he had crossed the middle courtyard of the palace, Yahweh gave him a message.

⁵He said, “Go back to Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, and say to him, ‘I, Yahweh, the God whom your ancestor King David worshiped, have heard what you prayed. And I have seen your tears. So, listen, I am going to heal you. Two days from now you will be able to go up to my temple. ⁶I will enable you to live for fifteen more years. And I will rescue you and this city again from the power of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for the sake of my own reputation and because of what I promised King David, who served me well.’”

⁷Isaiah returned to the palace and told Hezekiah what Yahweh had said. Then he said to Hezekiah’s servants, “Bring a paste made of boiled figs. Put some of it on his boils, and he will get well.” The servants did that, and the king recovered.

⁸Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, “What will Yahweh do to prove that he will heal me and that two days from now I will be able to go up to the temple?”

⁹Isaiah replied, “Yahweh will do something that will prove to you that he will do what he promised. Do you want him to cause the shadow on the stairway to go back ten steps or to go forward ten steps?”

¹⁰Hezekiah replied, “It is easy for the shadow to move forward, because that is what it always does. Ask Yahweh to make it move backward ten steps on the stairway that King Ahaz ordered his servants to build.”

¹¹So Isaiah prayed earnestly to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused the shadow to go backward ten steps on the stairway of king Ahaz.

¹²At that time, King Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan, the previous king of Babylonia, heard a report that King Hezekiah had been very sick. So he wrote some letters and gave them to some messengers to take to Hezekiah, along with a gift. ¹³When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. Then he showed them all the treasure that was in his palace and treasuries—the silver and gold, the spices, the nice-smelling olive oil, and all the weapons for his soldiers. There were no valuable things in his storerooms or anywhere else in his kingdom that he did not show them.

¹⁴Then the prophet Isaiah went to Hezekiah and asked him, “Where did those men come from, and what did they say to you?”

Hezekiah replied, “They came from a country very far from here. They came from Babylonia.”

¹⁵Isaiah asked, “What did they see in your palace?”

Hezekiah replied, “They saw everything. I showed them absolutely everything that I own—all my valuable things.”

¹⁶Isaiah knew that Hezekiah had done a very foolish thing. So Isaiah said to him, “Listen to what Yahweh says to you. ¹⁷There will be a time when everything that is still in your palace, all the valuable things that were put there by you and your ancestors, will be carried away to Babylon. There will be nothing left here! That is what Yahweh says to you! ¹⁸Furthermore, some of your own descendants will be forced to go there, and they will be castrated in order that they may become servants in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

¹⁹Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, “The message from Yahweh that you have given to me is good.” He said that because he was thinking, “Even if that happens, there will be peace and security in Israel all during the remaining time that I remain alive.”

²⁰If you want to know more about all the other things that Hezekiah did, about his brave deeds in battle, about how he commanded his people to build a reservoir in the city and a tunnel to be dug to bring water into the reservoir, they are all written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ²¹Later Hezekiah died, and his son Manasseh became the king.

Chapter 21

¹Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to rule. He ruled Judah for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Hephzibah. ²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He imitated the disgusting things that were formerly done by the people of the nations that Yahweh had driven out from the land of Israel as his people advanced through the land. ³He commanded his workers to rebuild the places of idol worship built on the hills. Those were the very high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He directed his workers to build altars to offer sacrifices of living creatures to Baal. Manasseh made a statue of the goddess Asherah, as Ahab the king of Israel had done previously. And Manasseh worshiped the stars and he served them. ⁴He directed his workers to build altars for worshiping foreign gods in the temple of Yahweh, even though Yahweh had said, “It is here in Jerusalem where I want people to worship me, forever.” ⁵He directed that altars for worshiping the stars be built in both of the courtyards in the temple grounds. ⁶He even sacrificed his own son and burned him in the fire. He performed rituals to practice sorcery and spells. He also went to people who consulted the spirits of dead people to find out what would happen in the future. He did many things that Yahweh said are extremely evil, things that caused Yahweh to become very angry.

⁷He placed the statue of the goddess Asherah in the temple, the place about which Yahweh had said to David and his son Solomon, “My temple will be here in Jerusalem. This is the city that I have chosen from all the territory of the twelve tribes of Israel, where I want people to worship me forever. ⁸And if the Israelite people obey all my commands and all the laws that I gave to Moses, the man who served me very well, I will not again force them to

leave this land that I gave to their ancestors.”⁹ But the people did not pay attention to Yahweh. Manasseh persuaded them to commit sins that were more evil than the sins that were committed by the people of the nations that Yahweh had driven from the land as the Israelite people advanced.

¹⁰These are some of the things that Yahweh said through his prophets. Many times Yahweh had given them these messages: ¹¹“Manasseh, the king of Judah, has done these abominable things, things that are much worse than the things that the Amor people group did in this land long ago. He has lead the people of Judah to sin against Yahweh by worshiping the idols that he worshiped. ¹²Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom you Israelite people worship, says to you: I am about to cause disaster to come to Jerusalem and the rest of Judah. It will be terrible, with the result that everyone who hears about it will be stunned. ¹³I will judge and punish the people of Jerusalem as I punished the family of King Ahab of Israel. I will remove the people of Jerusalem as people wipe a plate clean and then turn it upside down to show that they are now satisfied. ¹⁴And I will abandon the people who remain alive, and I will allow their enemies to conquer them and steal everything valuable from their land. ¹⁵I will do this because my people have done things that I say are very evil, things which have caused me to become very angry. They have caused me to become angry continually, ever since the time that their ancestors left Egypt.”

¹⁶Manasseh commanded his officials to kill many innocent people in Jerusalem, with the result that their blood flowed in the streets. He did this in addition to persuading the people of Judah to do many things that Yahweh said were evil.

¹⁷If you want to know more about all the things that Manasseh did, and the sin that he committed, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ¹⁸Manasseh died and was buried in the garden outside his palace, the garden that Uzza had made. Then his son Amon became the king.

¹⁹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king. He ruled Judah from Jerusalem for only two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth. She was from the city of Jotbah, and was the daughter of Haruz. ²⁰He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹He imitated the behavior of his father, and he worshiped the same idols that his father had worshiped. ²²He abandoned Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors had worshiped, and did not behave as Yahweh wanted him to behave. ²³Then one day some of his officials made plans to kill him. They assassinated him in the palace.

²⁴But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated King Amon, and they appointed his son Josiah to be their king.

²⁵If you want to read about the other things that Amon did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁶Amon was also buried in the tomb in the garden that Uzza had made. Then his son Josiah became the king.

Chapter 22

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

³After Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he sent his secretary Shaphan son of Azaliah and grandson of Meshullam, to the temple with these instructions: ⁴“Go to Hilkiah, the high priest, and tell him to give me a report, telling me how much money the men who guard the doors of the temple have collected from the people as offerings. ⁵Then tell him to give all that money to the men who are supervising the work of repairing the temple.

⁶They must give that money to the carpenters, the builders, and the masons, and they should also buy the timber and the stones that they will use to repair the temple.” ⁷But the men who supervise the work will not be required to make a report on the money that is given to them, saying what they spent it for, because those men are completely honest.

⁸After Shaphan the king's secretary said that to Hilkiah, Hilkiah said to Shaphan, "I have found in the temple a scroll on which is written the laws that God gave to Moses!" Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he started to read it.

⁹Then Shaphan took the scroll to the king and said to him, "Your temple guards have taken the money that was in the temple, and they have given it to the men who will supervise the work of repairing the temple." ¹⁰Then Shaphan said to the king, "I have brought to you a scroll that Hilkiah gave to me." And Shaphan started to read it to the king.

¹¹When the king heard the laws that were written in the scroll that Shaphan was reading to him, he tore his clothes because he was very upset. ¹²Then he gave these instructions to Hilkiah, to Shaphan's son Ahikam, to Micaiah's son Akbor, and to Asaiah, the king's special advisor: ¹³"Go and ask Yahweh for me and for all the people of Judah, about what is written in this scroll that has been found. Because it is clear that Yahweh is very angry with us because our ancestors disobeyed the things that are written on this scroll, things that we should have done."

¹⁴So Hilkiah, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah, who was a prophetess who lived in the newer part of Jerusalem. Her husband Shallum son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, took care of the robes that were worn in the temple. Those five men told her about the scroll.

¹⁵She then told them what Yahweh the God whom the Israelites worship says, "Yahweh has a message for the king who sent you to me, and this is what Yahweh says: ¹⁶Listen to this carefully. I am going to bring a disaster on Jerusalem and all the people who live here, which is what was written in the scroll that the king has read. ¹⁷I will do that because they have abandoned me, and they burn incense to honor other gods. They have caused me to become very angry by all the idols that they have made, and my anger is like a fire that will not be put out. ¹⁸The king of Judah sent you to inquire what I, Yahweh, want him to do. This is what you should say to him, "You have paid attention to what was written in the scroll. ¹⁹Also, you have repented and humbled yourself when you heard what I threatened to do to punish this city and the people who live here, I have heard what you prayed. I said that I would cause this city to be abandoned. It will be a city whose name people will use when they curse someone. But because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you. ²⁰So I will allow you to die and be buried peacefully. I will cause a great disaster to come to this place, but you will not be alive to see it.'""

After the men heard that, they returned to King Josiah and gave him that message.

Chapter 23

¹Then the king summoned all the elders of Jerusalem and of the other places in Judah. ²They went together to the temple, along with the priests and the prophets, and many other people, from the most important people to the least important people. And while they listened, the king read to them all of the laws that Moses had written. He read from the scroll that had been found in the temple. ³Then the king stood next to the pillar where the kings stood when they made important announcements, and, while Yahweh was listening, he repeated his promise to sincerely obey with his inner being the covenant. And all the people also promised to obey the covenant.

⁴Then the king gave a command to Hilkiah, the high priest, to all the other priests who assisted him, and to the men who guarded the entrance to the temple. He told them to bring out from the temple all the items that people had been using to worship Baal, the goddess Asherah, and the stars. After they carried them out, they burned all those things outside the city in the Kidron Valley. Then they took all the ashes to Bethel. ⁵There were many pagan priests whom the previous kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense on the altars scattered throughout the region of Judah and to worship on the high places that they had built on the hills. They had been offering sacrifices to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, the planets, and the stars. The king stopped them from doing those things. ⁶He commanded that the statue of the goddess Asherah be taken out of the temple. Then they took it outside Jerusalem, down to the Kidron Valley, and burned it. Then they pounded the ashes to powder and scattered that over the graves of ordinary people. ⁷He also took everything out of the rooms in the temple where the temple male prostitutes lived. That was where women wove robes that were used to worship the goddess Asherah.

⁸⁻⁹Josiah also brought to Jerusalem all the priests who were offering sacrifices in the other cities of Judah. He also desecrated the places on the hills where the priests had burned incense to honor idols, from Geba in the north to Beersheba in the south. Those priests were not allowed to offer sacrifices in the temple, but they were allowed to eat the unleavened bread that the priests who worked in the temple ate. He also commanded that the altars that were near the gate built by Joshua, the mayor of Jerusalem, be destroyed. Those altars were at the left of the main gate into the city.

¹⁰Josiah also desecrated the place named Topheth, in the Ben Hinnom Valley, in order that no one could offer his son or daughter there to be completely burned on the altar as a sacrifice to the god Molech. ¹¹He also removed the horses that the previous kings of Judah had dedicated to worshiping the sun, and he burned the chariots that were used in that worship. Those horses and chariots were kept in the courtyard outside the temple, near the entrance to the temple, and near the room where one of Josiah's officials lived, whose name was Nathan-Melek.

¹²Josiah also commanded his servants to tear down the altars that the previous kings of Judah had built on the palace roof, above the room where King Ahaz had stayed. They also tore down the altars that had been built by King Manasseh in the two courtyards outside the temple. He commanded that they be smashed to pieces and thrown down into the Kidron Valley. ¹³He also commanded that the altars that King Solomon had built east of Jerusalem, south of the Mount of Olives—the so-called Mount of Corruption—be desecrated. Solomon had built them for the worship of the disgusting idols—the statue of the goddess Ashtoreth worshiped by the people in the city of Sidon, Chemosh the god of the Moab people group, and Molech the god of the Ammon people group.

¹⁴They also broke into pieces the stone pillars that the Israelite people worshiped, and cut down the poles that honored the goddess Asherah, and they scattered the ground there with human bones to desecrate it.

¹⁵Furthermore, he commanded them to tear down the place of worship that was near the city of Bethel, the very same place of worship that had been built by King Jeroboam (whose father was Nebat, the same man who made Israel to sin against Yahweh). Josiah led the people of Israel to tear down that altar that was on the high hill, and they also burned the wooden pole used in the worship of the idol that had the name "Asherah." ¹⁶Then Josiah looked around and saw some tombs on the hill. He commanded his men to take the bones out of those tombs and burn them on the altar. By doing that, he desecrated the altar. These events were predicted many years before when Yahweh gave his word to Israel by his prophet.

¹⁷Josiah asked, "Whose tomb is that?" The people of Bethel replied, "It is the tomb of the prophet who came from Judah and predicted that these things that you have just now done to this altar would happen."

¹⁸Josiah replied, "Allow his tomb to remain as it is. Do not remove the prophet's bones from the tomb."

So the people did not remove those bones, or the bones of the other prophet, the one who had come from Samaria.

¹⁹In every city in Samaria, at Josiah's command, they tore down the houses built on hills to worship idols. The ones that had been built by the previous kings of Israel, which had caused Yahweh to become very angry. He did to all those places of idols worship the same thing that he had done to the altars at Bethel. ²⁰He ordered that all the priests who offered sacrifices on the places built on the hills where they worshiped idols, and they were to be killed on those altars. Then he burned human bones on every one of those altars to desecrate them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹Then the king commanded all the people to celebrate the Passover festival to honor Yahweh their God, which was written in the law of Moses that they should do every year. ²²During all the years that leaders ruled Israel and during all the years that kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, they had not celebrated that festival. ²³But now, after Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, to honor Yahweh they celebrated the Passover festival in Jerusalem.

²⁴Furthermore, Josiah removed from Jerusalem and other places in Judah all the people who practiced sorcery and those who asked the spirits of dead people to tell them what they should do. He also removed from Jerusalem and from the other places in Judah all the household idols and all the other idols and abominable things. He did those

things in order to obey what had been written in the scroll that Hilkiah had found in the temple. ²⁵Josiah was devoted to Yahweh with all that he felt and thought and with all his strength. There had never been in Judah or Israel a king like him. He obeyed all the laws of Moses. And there has never since then been a king like Josiah.

²⁶But Yahweh had become extremely angry with the people of Judah because of all the things that King Manasseh had done to provoke him, and he continued to be very angry. ²⁷He said, "I will do to Judah what I have done to Israel. I will drive away the people of Judah, with the result that they will never enter my presence again. And I will reject Jerusalem, the city that I chose to belong to me, and I will reject the temple, the place where I said that I should be worshiped."

²⁸If you want to know more about all the other things that Josiah did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah.

²⁹While he was the king of Judah, King Necho of Egypt led his army north to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah tried to stop the army of Egypt at the city of Megiddo, but he was killed in a battle there. ³⁰His officials placed his corpse in a chariot from Megiddo, and took it back to Jerusalem, where it was buried in his own tomb.

Then the people of Judah poured olive oil on Josiah's son Joahaz, to appoint him to be the new king.

³¹Joahaz was twenty-three years old when he became the king of Judah, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from the city of Libnah. ³²Joahaz did many things that Yahweh said were evil, just like many of his ancestors had done. ³³King Necho's army captured him and tied him up with chains and took him as a prisoner to the city of Riblah in the district of Hamath, to prevent him from continuing to rule in Jerusalem. Necho forced the people of Judah to pay to him about 3.3 metric tons of silver and thirty three kilograms of gold. ³⁴King Necho appointed another son of Josiah, Eliakim, to be the new king, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Then he took Joahaz to Egypt, and later Joahaz died there in Egypt.

³⁵King Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people of Judah. He collected more from the rich people and less from the poor people. He collected silver and gold from them, in order to pay to the king of Egypt what he commanded them to give.

³⁶Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Zebidah, the daughter of Pedaiah from the city of Rumah. ³⁷He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his ancestors had done.

Chapter 24

¹While Jehoiakim was ruling Judah, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah. They defeated the Judean army, and as a result, Jehoiakim was required to pay much tribute to King Nebuchadnezzar. But after three years, Jehoiakim rebelled. ²Then Yahweh sent raiders from Babylonia and Aram, and from the Moab and Ammon people groups, to attack the people of Judah and kill them, just as Yahweh had told his prophets to warn the people would happen. ³These things happened to the people of Judah just as Yahweh had commanded. He decided to destroy the people of Judah because of the many sins that King Manasseh had committed. ⁴Manasseh had even caused many innocent people in Jerusalem to be killed, and Yahweh would not forgive that.

⁵The other things that happened while Jehoiakim was king, and all the things that he did, are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ⁶When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the king.

⁷The army of the king of Babylon defeated the army of Egypt. The king of Babylon took control of all the area that the Egyptians formerly controlled, from the brook at the border of Egypt in the south to the Euphrates River in the north. So the army of the king of Egypt did not return to attack Judah again.

⁸Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became the king of Judah. His mother's name was Nehushta. She was the daughter of a man from Jerusalem named Elnathan. Jehoiachin ruled in Jerusalem for only three months.

⁹Jehoiachin did many things that Yahweh said were evil, all the evil things that his father had done.

¹⁰While Jehoiachin was king, some officers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came along with the whole Babylonian army to Jerusalem, and they surrounded the city. ¹¹While they were doing that, Nebuchadnezzar himself came to the city. ¹²Then King Jehoiachin, his mother, his advisors, important officers, palace officials all surrendered to the Babylonian army.

When Nebuchadnezzar had been king for eight years, he captured Jehoiachin and took him to Babylon. ¹³Just as Yahweh had said would happen, Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took to Babylon all the valuable things from Yahweh's temple and from the king's palace. They cut up all the gold items that King Solomon had put in the temple. ¹⁴They took from Jerusalem to Babylon ten thousand people, including the important officials and the best soldiers and the people who made and repaired things that were made of metal. Only the very poor people were left in Judah.

¹⁵Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers seized King Jehoiachin and took him to Babylon, along with his wives and officials, his mother, and all the important people. He took them into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ¹⁶They also took to Babylon all seven thousand soldiers and one thousand men who knew how to make and repair things that are made from metal. All of these people whom they took were able to fight in battle. ¹⁷Then the king of Babylon appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, to be the king of Judah, and he changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸When Zedekiah was twenty-one years old, he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal. She was the daughter of a man named Jeremiah from the city of Libnah. ¹⁹But Zedekiah did many things that Yahweh said were evil, just as Jehoiachim had done. ²⁰Because Yahweh was very angry, he finally drove the people out of Jerusalem and the other places in Judah and sent them to Babylon.

This is what happened when Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Chapter 25

¹After Zedekiah had been ruling for nine years, on the tenth day of the tenth month of that year, King Nebuchadnezzar arrived with his whole army. They surrounded Jerusalem. Against the walls of the city, they built ramps made of earth, so that they could climb up and attack the city. ²It took them two years to do that. ³After Zedekiah had been ruling for eleven years, by the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the famine had become very bad. All the people's food was gone. ⁴Then the Babylonian soldiers broke through part of the city wall, and that enabled them to enter the city. All the soldiers of Judah tried to escape. But the Babylonian soldiers surrounded the city, so the king and the soldiers of Judah waited until it was nighttime. Then they fled through the gate that was between the two walls near the king's park. They ran across the fields and started to go down to the plain along the Jordan River. ⁵But the Babylonian soldiers chased after them. They caught the king when he was by himself in the plains of Jericho. He was by himself because all his soldiers had abandoned him. ⁶The Babylonian soldiers took King Zedekiah to the city of Riblah in Babylonia. There the king of Babylon decided what they would do to punish him. ⁷The king of Babylon forced Zedekiah to watch as the Babylonian soldiers killed all of Zedekiah's sons. Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes. They put bronze chains on his hands and feet and took him to the city of Babylon.

⁸On the seventh day in the fifth month of that year, after Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for nineteen years, Nebuzaradan arrived in Jerusalem. He was one of King Nebuchadnezzar's officials; he was in command of the men who guarded the king. ⁹He ordered his soldiers to burn down Yahweh's temple, the king's palace, and all the houses in Jerusalem. So they burned down all the important buildings in the city. ¹⁰Then Nebuzaradan supervised the Babylonian soldiers as they tore down the walls surrounding Jerusalem. ¹¹After that, he and his soldiers took to Babylon the people who were still living in the city, the other people who lived in the region of Judah, and the

soldiers who had previously surrendered to the Babylonian army. ¹²But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the very poor people to stay in Judah to take care of the vineyards and to plant crops in the fields.

¹³The Babylonian soldiers broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the bronze stands with wheels, and the large bronze tank known as "The Sea," all of which were in the temple courtyard, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴They also took the pots, the shovels, the instruments for snuffing out the lamps, the dishes, and all the other bronze items that the Israelite priests had used for offering sacrifices in the temple. ¹⁵The soldiers also took away the pans for the ashes of the sacrifices, the basins, and all the other items made of gold or silver.

¹⁶The bronze from the two pillars, the bronze stands with wheels, and the huge tank that was called "The Sea," were all so very heavy that they could not be weighed. These things had been made for the temple when Solomon was the king of Israel. ¹⁷Each of the pillars was eight and one-third meters high. The bronze capital of each pillar was one and one-third meters high. They were each decorated all around with something that looked like a net made of bronze chains connecting bronze pomegranates.

¹⁸Nebuzaradan took with him to Babylon Seraiah, the high priest; Zephaniah, his assistant; and the three men who guarded the entrance to the temple. ¹⁹From the people who were still left in Jerusalem, he took one officer from the Judean army, five of the king's advisors, the chief secretary of the army commander who was in charge of recruiting men to join the army, and sixty other important Judean men. ²⁰Nebuzaradan took them all to the king of Babylon at the city of Riblah. ²¹There at the city of Riblah, in the province of Hamath, the king of Babylon commanded that they all be executed.

That is what happened when the people of Judah were taken forcefully from their land to Babylon.

²²Then King Nebuchadnezzar appointed a man named Gedaliah to be the governor of the people who he still allowed to live in Judah. Gedaliah was a son of Ahikam and a grandson of Shaphan. ²³When all the army commanders in Judah and their soldiers found out that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah to be the governor, they met with him at the city of Mizpah. These commanders were Ishmael son of Nethaniah; Johanan son of Kareah; Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, from the city of Netophah; and Jaazaniah, from the region of Maacah.

²⁴Gedaliah solemnly promised them that the officials from Babylon were not planning to harm them. He said, "You may live in this land without being afraid; you should obey the king of Babylon. If you do, everything will go well for you."

²⁵But in the seventh month of that year, Ishmael, whose grandfather Elishama was in the family descended from King David, went to Mizpah along with ten other men. They assassinated Gedaliah and all the men with him. There were also men from Judah and men from Babylon whom they assassinated. ²⁶Then many of the people from Judah, important people and unimportant ones, and the army commanders were very afraid of what the Babylonians would do to them, so they fled to Egypt.

²⁷Thirty-seven years after King Jehoiachin of Judah had been taken to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's son Awel-Marduk became the king of Babylon. He was kind to Jehoiachin, and on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of that same year, he released Jehoiachin from prison. ²⁸He always spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and honored him more than the other kings who had been taken to Babylon. ²⁹He gave Jehoiachin new clothes to replace the clothes that he had been wearing in prison, and he allowed Jehoiachin to eat at the king's table every day for the rest of his life.

³⁰The king of Babylon also gave him money every day, so that he could buy the things that he needed. The king continued to do that until Jehoiachin died.

1 Chronicles

Chapter 1

These are the descendants of Adam

¹The first person God created was Adam. Seth was Adam's son. Enosh was Seth's son. ²Kenan was Enosh's son. Mahalalel was Kenan's son. Jared was Mahalalel's son. ³Enoch was Jared's son. Methuselah was Enoch's son. Lamech was Methuselah's son. ⁴Noah was Lamech's son. Shem, Ham, and Japheth were Noah's sons.

⁵Japheth's sons were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

⁶Gomer's sons were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁷Javan's sons were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.

⁸Ham's sons were Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.

⁹Cush's sons were Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah, and Sabteka.

Raamah's sons were Sheba and Dedan.

¹⁰Another son of Cush was Nimrod. When he grew up, he became a mighty warrior on the earth.

¹¹Egypt was the ancestor of the Lud, the Anam, the Lehab, the Naphtuh, ¹²the Pathrus, the Kasluh, and the Caphtor people groups. The Philistines descended from the Kasluh people group.

¹³Canaan's first son was Sidon. He was also the ancestor of the Hittites, ¹⁴the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁵the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁶the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

¹⁷Shem's sons were Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

Aram's sons were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.

¹⁸Arphachshad was the father of Shelah. Shelah was the father of Eber.

¹⁹Eber had two sons. The name of the first was Peleg, which sounds like the word that means 'divided' because during the time that he lived, God had divided the people on the earth into various language groups. Peleg's brother was Joktan.

²⁰Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²¹Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²²Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²³Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the descendants of Joktan.

²⁴These are the descendants of Shem, in order from him to Abraham: Arphaxad, Shelah, ²⁵Eber, Peleg, Reu, ²⁶Serug, Nahor, Terah, ²⁷and Abram, whose name God later changed to Abraham.

²⁸Abraham's sons were Isaac and Ishmael.

²⁹These were their family lines: The firstborn son of Ishmael, the son of Abraham's slave wife Hagar, was Nebaioth, then his other sons Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ³⁰Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, ³¹Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. Ishmael had twelve sons.

³²After Abraham's wife Sarah died, he took a concubine named Keturah. Her sons with Abraham were Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Jokshan's sons were Sheba and Dedan.

³³Midian's sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanok, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were Keturah's descendants.

³⁴Abraham had his son Isaac by his wife Sarah, and Isaac's sons were Esau and Jacob, whose name God later changed to Israel.

³⁵Esau's sons were Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

³⁶Eliphaz's sons were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.

³⁷Reuel's sons were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

³⁸Another descendant of Esau was Seir. Seir's sons were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeaon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

³⁹Lotan's sons were Hori and Homam, and Lotan's sister was Timna.

⁴⁰Shobal's sons were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

Zibeaon's sons were Aiah and Anah.

⁴¹Anah's son was Dishon.

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

⁴²Ezer's sons were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

Dishan's sons were Uz and Aran.

⁴³These are the kings who ruled the region of Edom (where Seir's descendants lived) before any kings ruled over Israel:

Bela son of Beor, and his city's name was Dinhabah.

⁴⁴When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah, from the city of Bozrah, became the king.

⁴⁵When Jobab died, Husham became the king. He was from the region where the Teman people group lived.

⁴⁶When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, became the king. His city's name was Avith. Hadad's army defeated the army of the Midian people group in the region of Moab.

⁴⁷When Hadad died, Samlah became the king. He was from the city of Masrekah.

⁴⁸When Samlah died, Shaul became the king. He was from the city of Rehoboth Hannahar.

⁴⁹When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Akbor became the king.

⁵⁰When Baal-Hanan died, Hadar became the king. His city's name was Pau. His wife's name was Mehetabel; she was the daughter of Matred and the granddaughter of Me-Zahab. ⁵¹Then Hadad died.

The chiefs of the Edom people group were Chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁵²Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁵³Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁵⁴Magdiel, and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.

Chapter 2

¹The following were the sons of Israel (also known as Jacob): Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, ²Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

³Judah's sons were Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah had them with Bath-Shua from the Canaan people group. When Judah's oldest son Er grew up, he did something that Yahweh considered to be very wicked, so Yahweh caused him to die. ⁴Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar had twin boys named Perez and Zerah. So altogether Judah had five sons.

⁵Perez's sons were Hezron and Hamul.

⁶Zerah had five sons: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Kalkol, and Darda.

⁷Zimri had a son named Karmi. Karmi had a son named Achar. Achar (whose name sounds like "trouble") caused the people of Israel to experience much trouble, because he stole some of the things that were to be destroyed because they were dedicated to God.

⁸Ethan's son was Azariah.

⁹Hezron had three sons: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Caleb.

¹⁰Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was a leader of the tribe of Judah.

¹¹Nahshon was the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz. ¹²Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse.

¹³Jesse had his son Eliab first, Abinadab second, Shimea third. ¹⁴Nethanel fourth, Raddai fifth, ¹⁵Ozem sixth, then David last.

¹⁶Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. Zeruiah's three sons were Abishai, Joab, and Asahel. ¹⁷Abigail had Amasa. Amasa's father was Jether, a descendant of Ishmael.

¹⁸Hezron's third son Caleb had sons with one of his wives, Azubah. The sons were Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon. (The other wife's name was Jerioth.) ¹⁹When Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath. They had a son named Hur. ²⁰Hur was the father of Uri. Uri was the father of Bezalel.

²¹Later, when Hezron was sixty years old, he had sexual intercourse with a daughter of Makir from the region of Gilead and married her. Hezron's new wife gave birth to their son Segub. ²²Segub was the father of Jair. Jair controlled 23 cities in the region of Gilead.

²³But the armies of Geshur and Aram captured from Jair the cities of Havvoth-Jair, Kenath, and the nearby towns; sixty towns altogether. All the people who lived there were descendants of Makir from the region of Gilead.

²⁴Shortly after Hezron died in Caleb-Ephrathah, Abijah, Hezron's widow, gave birth to Ashhur, who became the father of Tekoa.

²⁵Hezron's oldest son was Jerahmeel. His sons were Ram (the oldest), Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah. ²⁶Jerahmeel had another wife named Atarah. She was Onam's mother.

²⁷The sons of Ram, Jerahmeel's oldest son, were Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.

²⁸Onam's sons were Shammai and Jada.

Shammai's sons were Nadab and Abishur.

²⁹Abishur's wife was Abihail. Their sons were Ahban and Molid.

³⁰Nadab's sons were Seled and Appaim. Seled died childless. ³¹Appaim's son was Ishi; Ishi's son was Sheshan. Sheshan's son was Ahlai.

³²The sons of Jada (Shammai's brother) were Jether and Jonathan. Jether died childless.

³³Jonathan's sons were Peleth and Zaza.

These were the descendants of Jerahmeel.

³⁴Sheshan did not have any sons; he only had daughters. He had a servant from Egypt whose name was Jarha.

³⁵Sheshan arranged for his daughter to marry Jarha his servant. She and Jarha had a son: Attai.

³⁶Attai was the father of Nathan.

Nathan was the father of Zabad.

³⁷Zabad was the father of Ephlal.

Ephlal was the father of Obed.

³⁸Obed was the father of Jehu.

Jehu was the father of Azariah.

³⁹Azariah was the father of Helez.

Helez was the father of Eleasah.

⁴⁰Eleasah was the father of Sismai.

Sismai was the father of Shallum.

⁴¹Shallum was the father of Jekamiah.

Jekamiah was the father of Elishama.

⁴²Jerahmeel's brother was Caleb.

Caleb's oldest son was Mesha. Mesha was the father of Ziph. Ziph was the father of Mareshah. Mareshah was the father of Hebron. ⁴³Hebron's sons were Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. ⁴⁴Shema was the father of Raham. Raham was the father of Jorkeam. Rekem was the father of Shammai.

⁴⁵Shammai's son was Maon. Maon was the father of Beth Zur.

⁴⁶Caleb had a slave wife named Ephah. She gave birth to Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran had a son whom he also named Gazez.

⁴⁷Jahdai's sons were: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph.

⁴⁸Caleb had another slave wife named Maacah. She gave birth to Sheber and Tirhanah. ⁴⁹She also gave birth to Shaaph (who was the father of Madmannah), Sheva (who was the father of Makbenah and Gibeon). Caleb's daughter was Aksah.

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹These people were also descendants of Caleb: Caleb had another wife whose name was Ephrathah. Their oldest son was Hur. Hur's sons were Shobal, Salma, and Hareph. Shobal started the city of Kiriath Jearim. Salma started the city of Bethlehem. Hareph started the city of Beth Gader. ⁵²The descendants of Shobal (who was the

father of Kiriath-Jearim) were Haroeh and half of the Manahath people group. ⁵³His descendants also included clans that lived in Kiriath Jearim: Ithri, Put, Shumath, and Mishra. The Zorath clan and the Eshtaol clan came from these other clans.

⁵⁴Salma's descendants were the people of Bethlehem, the clan of Netophath, the clan of Atroth Beth Joab, and the half the clan of Manahath, who were also Zorites. ⁵⁵The families who wrote and copied important documents and who lived in the town of Jabez were the clan of Tirath, the clan of Shimeath, and the clan of Sucath. They were all from the Kenite people group who descended from Hammath, the ancestor of the family of Rekab.

Chapter 3

The sons of King David

¹The following were the sons of King David who were born in the city of Hebron:

His oldest son was Amnon, whose mother Ahinoam was from the city of Jezreel.

His second son was Daniel, whose mother Abigail was from the city of Carmel. ²His third son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king who ruled in the city of Geshur.

His fourth son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. ³His fifth son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital.

His sixth son was Ithream. David had him with his wife Eglah.

⁴All six were born in Hebron, where David ruled for seven and one-half years.

After that, David ruled in Jerusalem for 33 years. ⁵The following were born to David in Jerusalem.

Bathshua, the daughter of Ammiel, gave birth to four of his sons: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon.

⁶Other sons were Ibhar, Elishua, Elphelet, ⁷Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁸Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine in all.

⁹In addition to all those sons, David's slave wives also gave birth to sons. They all had a sister named Tamar.

¹⁰Solomon's son was King Rehoboam.

Rehoboam's son was King Abijah.

Abijah's son was King Asa.

Asa's son was King Jehoshaphat.

¹¹Jehoshaphat's son was King Joram.

Joram's son was King Ahaziah.

Ahaziah's son was King Joash.

¹²Joash's son was King Amaziah.

Amaziah's son was King Azariah.

Azariah's son was King Jotham.

¹³Jotham's son was King Ahaz.

Ahaz's son was King Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's son was King Manasseh.

¹⁴Manasseh's son was King Amon.

Amon's son was King Josiah.

¹⁵Josiah had four sons. The oldest was Johanan. The second was Jehoiakim. The third was Zedekiah. The fourth was Shallum.

¹⁶The descendants of Jehoiakim included Jehoiakim's son Jeconiah and Jeconiah's son Zedekiah.

¹⁷Jeconiah was taken into exile in Babylon. His sons were Shealtiel, ¹⁸Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.

¹⁹Pedaiah's sons were Zerubbabel and Shimei.

Two of Zerubbabel's sons were Meshullam and Hananiah, and their sister was Shelomith. ²⁰Zerubbabel's five other sons were Hashubah, Ohel, Berekiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-Hesed.

²¹Hananiah's descendants were Pelatiah, Jeshaiiah, the sons of Rephaiah, of Arnan, of Obadiah, and of Shecaniah.

²²Shecaniah's six descendants were Shemaiah and Shemaiah's sons Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat.

²³Neariah's three sons were Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam.

²⁴Elioenai's seven sons were Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani.

Chapter 4

Other clans descended from Judah

¹Judah's sons were Perez, Hezron, Karmi, Hur, and Shobal.

²Shobal's son was Reaiah. Reaiah was the father of Jahath, and Jahath was the father of Ahumai and Lahad. They were the ancestors of the Zorath people group.

³What follows are the names of the three men who started the clans that lived in the city of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash—and they had a sister named Hazzelelponi. ⁴Hur was the firstborn son of Ephrathah; he founded the city of Bethlehem. Hur had these descendants: Penuel and Ezer. Penuel started the clans that lived in the city of Gedor, and Ezer started the clans living in the city of Hushah.

⁵Hezron's son Ashhur, the father of Tekoa, had two wives whose names were Helah and Naarah.

⁶Asshur and his wife Naarah had sons named Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.

⁷The sons of Ashhur and his wife Helah were Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan, ⁸and Koz. Koz was the father of Anub, Hazzobebah, and the ancestor of the clans descended from Aharhel. Aharhel was the son of Harum.

⁹There was another descendant of Judah whose name was Jabez. He was more respected than his brothers. His mother named him Jabez which means 'pain' because she said, "I was enduring much pain when I gave birth to him." ¹⁰One day he prayed to God whom his fellow Israelites worshiped, saying, "Please greatly bless me and increase the amount of land I own. Remain with me, and keep me from harm, so I will not experience any pain." And God did what Jabez requested.

¹¹Another descendant of Judah was Shuhah. His brother Kelub was the father of Mehir. Mehir was the father of Eshton. ¹²Eshton was the father of Beth Rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah. Tehinnah started the city of Nahash, but their families lived in a place called Rekah.

¹³⁻¹⁵Another descendant of Judah was Jephunneh. His son was Caleb. Caleb's sons were Iru, Elah, and Naam. Elah's son was Kenaz. The sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah.

Othniel's sons were Hathath and Meonothai. Meonothai was the father of Ophrah.

Seraiah was the father of Joab. Joab was the ancestor of the people who lived in Craftsmen's Valley. The valley was named that because many of the people who lived there were craftsmen. ¹⁶Another descendant of Judah was Jehallelel. His sons were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸Another descendant of Judah was Ezrah. Ezrah's sons were Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. Mered married Bithiah, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt. The children of Mered and Bithiah were Miriam, Shammai and Ishbah. Ishbah was the father of Eshtemoa. Mered had a wife from Judah. She gave birth to Jered, Heber, and Jekuthiel. Jered was the father of Gedor; Heber was the father of Soko, and Jekuthiel was the father of Zanoah.

¹⁹Hodiah's wife was Naham's sister. Hodiah's wife was the mother of two sons. One of them was the father of Keilah from the Gar people group, and the other one was the father of Eshtemoa from the Maacath people group.

²⁰Another descendant of Judah was Shimon. Shimon's sons were Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-Hanan, and Tilon.

Another descendant of Judah was Ishi. His sons were Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth.

²¹One of Judah's sons was Shelah. Shelah's sons were Er the father of Lekah, Laadah the father of Mareshah and the families of those who made things from linen at Beth Ashbea, ²²and Jokim and the men from the city of Kozeba, and Joash and Saraph, two men who ruled in the region of Moab and Jashubi Lehem. All their names and a record of what they did are written in scrolls. ²³Some of these descendants of Shelah made pottery and lived in the cities of Netaim and Gederah where they worked for the king.

²⁴Simeon's sons were Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerach, and Shaul.

²⁵Shaul's son was Shallum. Shallum's son was Mibsam. Mibsam's son was Mishma.

²⁶The following are Mishma's descendants: Mishma's son was Hammuel. Hammuel's son was Zaccur. Zaccur's son was Shimei.

²⁷Shimei had 16 sons and six daughters, but none of his brothers had many children. So the descendants of Simeon never were as many as the descendants of his younger brother Judah. ²⁸The descendants of Simeon lived in these cities and towns: Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual, ²⁹Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, ³⁰Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, ³¹Beth Markaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri, and Shaaraim. They lived in those places until David became king. ³²They also lived in villages: Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Token, and Ashan; five in all. ³³There were other villages which were near those towns, as far southwest as the city of Baalath. Those were the places where they lived, and they wrote down the names of their family members.

³⁴⁻³⁸The men in the following list were the leaders of their clans: Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, Joel, and Jehu son of Joshibiah. Joshibiah was son of Seraiah and grandson of Asiel. Other clan leaders were Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, and Ziza. Ziza was son of Shiphi and grandson of Allon son of Jedaiah, who was the son of Shimri, who was son of Shemaiah.

The members of those families became very numerous. ³⁹They went near the city of Gedor on the east side of the valley to look for pastureland for their flocks of sheep. ⁴⁰They found good pastureland with plenty of grass. The place was expansive, peaceful, and quiet.

In fact, some of the descendants of Noah's son Ham had lived there previously. ⁴¹But while Hezekiah was the king of Judah, those leaders of the tribe of Simeon (whose names were recorded in written accounts) came and fought

against the descendants of Ham and destroyed their tents. They also fought against the descendants of Meun who were living there, and they killed all of them. So now there are no descendants of Meun living there. The descendants of Simeon started to live there, because there was good pastureland there for their sheep.

⁴²From that tribe, from Simeon, Ishi's four sons, Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, led 500 other men and went to the hill country of Edom called Seir. ⁴³They killed the descendants of Amalek who were still alive. From that time until now, the descendants of Simeon have lived in the region of Edom.

Chapter 5

These are the descendants of Reuben.

¹Reuben was the oldest son of the person named Israel (who was first known as Jacob), and Reuben had sons of his own. Reuben's status of firstborn entitled him to special rights that belonged to firstborn sons. But he slept with his father's slave wife, so his father gave those rights to the sons of Joseph, a younger son of Israel. The family records do not mention Reuben first, as the firstborn sons typically are. ²Although Judah became more influential than his brothers, and a ruler descended from Judah, Joseph's family received the rights that belonged to the firstborn. ³Again, Reuben was the person Israel's oldest son.

Reuben's sons were Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Karmi.

⁴Another descendant of Reuben was Joel. Joel had descendants. Joel's son was Shemaiah. Shemaiah's son was Gog. Gog's son was Shimei. ⁵Shimei's son was Micah. Micah's son was Reaiah. Reaiah's son was Baal. ⁶Baal's son was Beerah. Beerah was a leader of the tribe of Reuben. But Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria captured him and took him to Assyria.

⁷The names of these clans are listed here according to what is written in their family records.

The names written were: Jeiel (the leader), then Zechariah, ⁸and then Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel. Reuben's clan lived near the city of Aroer as far north as the city of Nebo and the city of Baal Meon. ⁹Some of them lived further east, as far as the edge of the desert that extends to the Euphrates River. They moved there because the amount of their cattle outgrew the pastureland for them in the region of Gilead.

¹⁰When Saul was king of Israel, the men in the tribe of Reuben fought against the descendants of Hagar and defeated them. After that, they lived in the tents that the descendants of Hagar had lived in previously, in all the area east of the region of Gilead.

¹¹The tribe of Gad lived near the tribe of Reuben in the region of Bashan, all the way east to the city of Salekah.

¹²Joel was their leader; Shapham was second-in-command; other leaders were Janai and Shaphat in Bashan.

¹³Other members of the tribe belonged to seven clans, whose leaders were Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jakan, Zia, and Eber.

¹⁴They were descendants of Abihail. Abihail was the son of Huri, Huri was the son of Jaroah, Jaroah was the son of Gilead, Gilead was son of Michael, Michael was the son of Jeshishai, Jeshishai was the son of Jahdo, and Jahdo was the son of Buz.

¹⁵Ahi was Abdiel's son. Abdiel was Guni's son. Ahi was the leader of their clan.

¹⁶The descendants of Gad lived in the towns in the regions of Gilead and Bashan, and on all the pastureland throughout the Plain of Sharon. ¹⁷Scribes wrote all of those names in the records of the clans of Gad during the time that Jotham was the king of the southern kingdom, Judah, and Jeroboam was the king of the northern kingdom, Israel.

These are the armies of the tribes that lived east of the Jordan River.

¹⁸There were 44,760 soldiers descended from strong men in the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh. They all carried shields and swords and bows and arrows. They were all trained to fight in battles. ¹⁹They attacked the descendants of Hagar and the people in the cities of Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab. ²⁰God enabled the men from those three tribes to defeat the descendants of Hagar and all those who were helping them because the men from those three tribes prayed to God during the battles, requesting he help them. So he helped them because they trusted in him. ²¹They took the animals that belonged to the descendants of Hagar: 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, and 2,000 donkeys. They also captured 100,000 people. ²²But many descendants of Hagar died because God helped the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh defeat the descendants of Hagar. After that, those three tribes lived in that area until the army of Assyria captured them and took them away to the east.

²³There were many people who belonged to the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh. They lived in the region of Bashan east of the Jordan River, as far north as Baal Hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon.

²⁴Their clan leaders were Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel. They were all mighty and famous soldiers and leaders of their clans. ²⁵But they sinned against God, the one whom their ancestors had worshiped. They worshiped the gods that the people of that region had worshiped, the people whom God had enabled them to destroy. ²⁶So the God whom the Israelites worshiped incited Pul, the king of Assyria, to want to conquer those tribes. Pul's other name was Tiglath-Pileser. His army captured the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh, and took them to various places in Assyria: Halah, Habor, Hara and near the Gozan River. They have lived in those places from that time to the present time.

Chapter 6

These are the descendants of Levi.

¹Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

²Kohath's sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

³Amram's children were Miriam, Aaron, and Moses.

Aaron's sons were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁴Eleazar was the father of Phinehas.

Phinehas was the father of Abishua.

⁵Abishua was the father of Bukki.

Bukki was the father of Uzzi.

⁶Uzzi was the father of Zerahiah.

Zerahiah was the father of Meraioth.

⁷Meraioth was the father of Amariah.

Amariah was the father of Ahitub.

⁸Ahitub was the father of Zadok.

Zadok was the father of Ahimaaz.

⁹Ahimaaz was the father of Azariah.

Azariah was the father of Johanan.

¹⁰Johanan was the father of Azariah. Azariah was a priest in the temple that Solomon commanded to be built in Jerusalem.

¹¹Azariah was the father of Amariah.

Amariah was the father of Ahitub.

¹²Ahitub was the father of Zadok.

Zadok was the father of Shallum.

¹³Shallum was the father of Hilkiah.

Hilkiah was the father of Azariah.

¹⁴Azariah was the father of Seraiah.

Seraiah was the father of Jozadak. ¹⁵Jozadak was forced to leave his home when Yahweh sent King Nebuchadnezzar's army to capture many people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah and compel them to go to Babylonia.

¹⁶Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁷The names of Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei.

¹⁸Kohath's sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹⁹Merari's sons were Mahli and Mushi.

Here is a list of the descendants of Levi, who became leaders of their clans.

²⁰Gershon's oldest son was Libni.

Libni's son was Jahath.

Jahath's son was Zimmah.

²¹Zimmah's son was Joah.

Joah's son was Iddo.

Iddo's son was Zerah.

Zerah's son was Jeatherai.

²²Another line of descendants from Kohath started with Amminadab his son.

Amminadab's son was Korah.

Korah's son was Assir.

²³Assir's son was Elkanah.

Elkanah's son was Ebiasaph.

Ebiasaph's son was Assir.

²⁴Assir's son was Tahath.

Tahath's son was Uriel.

Uriel's son was Uziah.

Uzziah's son was Shaul.

²⁵Elkanah's sons were Amasai, Ahimoth,

²⁶and a son also named Elkanah.

Elkanah's son was Zophai.

Zophai's son was Nahath.

²⁷Nahath's son was Eliab.

Eliab's son was Jeroham.

Jeroham's son was Elkanah.

²⁸Samuel had sons: his oldest son (Joel) and his other son Abijah.

²⁹Merari's descendants started with Mahli.

Mahli's son was Libni.

Libni's son was Shimei.

Shimei's son was Uzzah.

³⁰Uzzah's son was Shimea.

Shimea's son was Haggiah.

Haggiah's son was Asaiah.

³¹After the sacred chest was brought to Jerusalem, King David appointed some of the men who were descendants of Levi to be in charge of the music in the place where the people worshiped Yahweh. ³²Those musicians made music in the sacred tent, which was also called the tent of meeting, by singing and playing their instruments, and they continued to do that until Solomon's workers built the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. In all their work, they obeyed the instructions that David had given them.

³³Here is a list of the musicians and their sons:

From Kohath's descendants there was Heman, the leader of the singers.

Heman was Joel's son.

Joel was Samuel's son.

³⁴Samuel was Elkanah's son.

Elkanah was Jeroham's son.

Jeroham was Eliel's son.

Eliel was Toah's son.

³⁵Toah was Zuph's son.

Zuph was Elkanah's son.

Elkanah was Mahath's son.

Mahath was Amasai's son.

³⁶Amasai was Elkanah's son.

Elkanah was Joel's son.

Joel was Azariah's son.

Azariah was Zephaniah's son.

³⁷Zephaniah was Tahath's son.

Tahath was Assir's son.

Assir was Ebiasaph's son.

Ebiasaph was Korah's son.

³⁸Korah was Izhar's son.

Izhar was Kohath's son.

Kohath was Levi's son.

Levi was the son of Jacob (who was later named Israel).

³⁹Heman's helper was Asaph. His group stood at the right side of Heman.

Asaph was Berekiah's son.

Berekiah was Shimea's son.

⁴⁰Shimea was Michael's son.

Michael was Baaseiah's son.

Baaseiah was Malkijah's son.

⁴¹Malkijah was Ethni's son.

Ethni was Zerah's son.

Zerah was Adaiah's son.

⁴²Adaiah was Ethan's son.

Ethan was Zimmah's son.

Zimmah was Shimei's son.

⁴³Shimei was Jahath's son.

Jahath was Gershon's son.

Gershon was Levi's son.

⁴⁴A group of singers from Merari's family helped Heman and Asaph. They stood at the left of Heman. The leader of this group was Ethan.

Ethan was Kishi's son.

Kishi was Abdi's son.

Abdi was Malluk's son.

⁴⁵Malluk was Hashabiah's son.

Hashabiah was Uziah's son.

Uziah was Hilkiyah's son.

⁴⁶Hilkiyah was Amzi's son.

Amzi was Bani's son.

Bani was Shemer's son.

⁴⁷Shemer was Mahli's son.

Mahli was Mushi's son.

Mushi was Merari's son.

Merari was Levi's son.

⁴⁸David appointed the other descendants of Levi to do other work in the sacred tent, the place where the people worshiped God.

⁴⁹Aaron and his descendants were the ones who placed on the altar the sacrifices that were to be burned completely, and they burned incense on another altar. Those sacrifices were in order that Yahweh would no longer be angry with the people of Israel for having sinned. Those men also did other work in the very holy place in the sacred tent, obeying the instructions that Moses, who served God well, had given to them.

⁵⁰These were the descendants of Aaron:

Aaron's son was Eleazar.

Eleazar's son was Phinehas.

Phinehas's son was Abishua.

⁵¹Abishua's son was Bukki.

Bukki's son was Uzzi.

Uzzi's son was Zerahiah.

⁵²Zerahiah's son was Meraioth.

Meraioth's son was Amariah.

Amariah's son was Ahitub.

⁵³Ahitub's son was Zadok,
and Zadok's son was Ahimaaz.

⁵⁴Here is a list of the places where Aaron's descendants lived. Those who were descendants of Kohath were the first group to be allotted property.

⁵⁵They received the city of Hebron in Judah and the pastureland around the city, ⁵⁶but Caleb received the fields farther from the city and the villages near the city. Caleb was Jephunneh's son.

⁵⁷The descendants of Aaron who were descendants of Kohath received Hebron, one of the cities to which people could flee and be protected if they accidentally killed someone. They also received the towns and pastureland near Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, ⁵⁸Hilen, Debir, ⁵⁹Ashan, and Beth Shemesh. ⁶⁰They also received from the tribe of Benjamin the cities of Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth and their pasturelands.

Altogether, these clans who descended from Kohath received thirteen cities.

⁶¹The other clans descended from Kohath received ten cities from the clans of the tribe of Manasseh that lived west of the Jordan River.

⁶²The clans of the descendants of Gershon received thirteen cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lived in the region of Bashan on the east side of the Jordan River.

⁶³The clans of the descendants of Merari received twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁶⁴The leaders of Israel allotted those towns and the nearby pasturelands to the descendants of Levi. ⁶⁵They also allotted to them the cities from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin that were listed previously.

⁶⁶Some of the descendants of Kohath received cities from the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶⁷They received Shechem, which was one of the cities to which people could flee and be protected if they accidentally killed someone, along with the nearby pastureland in the hills of Ephraim. They also received these cities and pastureland near them: Gezer, ⁶⁸Jokmeam, Beth Horon, ⁶⁹Aijalon, and Gath Rimmon.

⁷⁰The other descendants of Kohath received the cities of Aner and Bileam and the nearby pastureland from the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lives west of the Jordan River.

⁷¹The descendants of Gershom, who were part of the tribe of Manasseh, lived east of the Jordan River. They received two cities and pastureland near them: Golan in the regions of Bashan and Ashtaroth.

⁷²From the tribe of Issachar they received cities and pastureland near Kedesh, Daberath, ⁷³Ramoth, and Anem.

⁷⁴From the tribe of Asher they received cities and pastureland near Mashal, Abdon, ⁷⁵Hukok, and Rehob.

⁷⁶From the tribe of Naphtali they received cities and pastureland near Kedesh (in the region of Galilee), Hammon, and Kiriathaim.

⁷⁷The other descendants of Levi, those descended from Merari, received cities and pasturelands from the tribe of Zebulun near Rimmon and Tabor.

⁷⁸⁻⁷⁹From the tribe of Reuben they were allotted cities and towns and pastureland near Bezer in the wilderness, Jahzah, Kedemoth, and Mephaath. The tribe of Reuben lived east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ⁸⁰From the tribe of Gad, they received cities and pastureland near Ramoth in the region of Gilead, Mahanaim, ⁸¹Heshbon, and Jazer.

Chapter 7

These are the descendants of Issachar.

¹Issachar's four sons were Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

²Tola's sons were Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Samuel. They were all leaders of the clans descended from them. In the record of Tola's descendants in each generation were capable men who were in the army.

During the time that David was the king of Israel there were 22,600 such men.

³Uzzi's son was Izrahiah. Izrahiah's five sons were Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Ishiah. Izrahiah and his sons were all leaders of their clans.

⁴Also, in the record of those descendants were the names of 36,000 men who were in the army. The number was so large because they had many wives and children.

⁵They had relatives from the clans descended from Issachar. Those records from Issachar listed 87,000 capable men who were in the army in all.

⁶The three sons of Benjamin were Bela, Beker, and Jediahel.

⁷Bela's five sons were Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri. They were leaders of clans.

In their records there were names of 22,034 capable men who were in the army.

⁸Beker's sons were Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth. All these were his sons.

⁹In the records of their descendants were the names of 20,200 capable men and leaders of the clans who were in the army.

¹⁰Jediael's son was Bilhan. Bilhan's sons were Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Kenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar.

¹¹All of these descendants of Jediael were leaders of clans capable men who were in the army.

There were 17,200 men who would go out into battle.

¹²Shuppim and Huppim were the sons of a man named Ir.

Hushim was the son of a man named Aher.

¹³Naphtali's sons were Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. They were children of Jacob's slave wife Bilhah.

¹⁴Manasseh had sons by his slave wife who was from Aram. She gave birth to Asriel and Makir.

Makir was the father of Gilead.

¹⁵Makir had a wife who was from the clans of Huppim and Shuppim.

Makir's sister's name was Maacah.

Makir had a son named Zelophehad. Zelophehad had only daughters.

¹⁶Makir's wife (also named Maacah) gave birth to sons whom she named Peresh and Sheresh. Sheresh's sons were Ulam and Rakem.

¹⁷Ulam's son was Bedan.

Those were the descendants of Gilead, the son of Makir and grandson of Manasseh.

¹⁸Gilead's sister was Hammoleketh. She was the mother of Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah.

¹⁹Another son of Gilead was Shemida, whose sons were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

²⁰These are the descendants of Ephraim.

One son of Ephraim was Shuthelah.

Shuthelah's son was Bered.

Bered's son was Tahath.

Tahath's son was Eleadah.

Eleadah's son was also named Tahath.

²¹Tahath's son was Zabad.

Zabad's son was Shuthelah.

Ephraim's other sons, Ezer and Elead, went to the city of Gath to steal some cattle. As a result, men from that city, natives of that area, killed Ezer and Elead. ²²Their father Ephraim cried for them for many days, and his family came to comfort him.

²³Then he and his wife slept together again; she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Ephraim named him Beriah which resembles the word 'trouble' because of the trouble that his family had experienced. ²⁴Ephraim's daughter was Sheerah. Her workers built three towns: Lower Beth Horon, Upper Beth Horon, and Uzen Sheerah.

²⁵Another son of Ephraim was Rephah.

Rephah's son was Resheph.

Resheph's son was Telah.

Telah's son was Tahan.

²⁶Tahan's son was Ladan.

Ladan's son was Ammihud.

Ammihud's son was Elishama.

²⁷Elishama's son was Non.

Non's son was Joshua, the man who led the Israelites after Moses died.

²⁸This is a list of the cities and areas where the descendants of Ephraim lived:

Bethel and the nearby villages;

Naaran to the east;

Gezer to the west and the nearby villages; and

Shechem and the nearby villages. Those villages extended north as far as Ayyah and the nearby villages.

²⁹Along the border of the area where the descendants of Manasseh lived were these towns: Beth Shan, Taanach, Megiddo, Dor, and all the nearby villages.

The people who lived in all those places were descendants of Jacob's son Joseph.

³⁰Asher's sons were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was Serah.

³¹Beriah's sons were Heber and Malkiel.

Malkiel was the father of Birzaith

³²Heber was the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and Shua their sister.

³³Japhlet's sons were Pasak, Bimhal, and Ashvath. These were Japhlet's children.

³⁴Shamer's sons were Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram.

³⁵Shomer's younger brother was Helem. Helem's sons were Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.

³⁶Zophah's sons were Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, ³⁷Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran (whose other name was Jether), and Beera.

³⁸Jether's sons were Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara.

³⁹Another descendant of Asher was Ulla, whose sons were Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.

⁴⁰All those men were descendants of Asher, and they were all leaders of their clans. They were capable, brave warriors and leaders of leaders. In the record of the clans that are descended from Asher are the names of 26,000 men who were in the army.

Chapter 8

These are the descendants of Benjamin.

¹Benjamin had sons: Bela, Ashbel, Aharah, ²Nohah, and Rapha, five in all.

³Bela's sons were Addar, Gera, Abihud, ⁴Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, ⁵Gera, Shephuphan, and Hiram.

⁶One of Gera's sons was Ehud. The descendants of Ehud were leaders of their clans who lived in the city of Geba, but others forced them to move to the city of Manahath. ⁷Ehud's sons were Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera.

Gera was the one who led them when they moved to Manahath. Gera was the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

⁸⁻¹¹Another descendant of Benjamin was Shaharaim. He and his wife Hushim had two sons, Abitub and Elpaal. In the region of Moab, Shaharaim divorced Hushim and his other wife Baara. Then he married a woman whose name was Hodesh, and they had seven sons: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malkam, Jeuz, Sakia, and Mirmah. They were all leaders of their clans. ¹²⁻¹³Elpaal's sons were Eber, Misham, Shemed, Beriah, and Shema. Shemed built the cities of Ono and Lod and their nearby villages. Beriah and Shema were leaders of their clans, who lived in the city of Aijalon. They forced the people who lived in the city of Gath to leave their city. ¹⁴⁻¹⁶Beriah's sons were Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth, Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, Michael, Ishpah, and Joha. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸Other descendants of Elpaal were also named Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber,

Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab. ¹⁹⁻²¹Another descendant of Benjamin was Shimei. Shimei's descendants included Jakim, Zicri, Zabdi, Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath. ²²⁻²⁵Shashak's sons were Ishpan, Eber, Eliel,

Abdon, Zicri, Hanan, Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, Iphdeiah, and Penuel. ²⁶⁻²⁷Another descendant of Benjamin was Jeroham, whose sons were Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, Jareshiah, Elijah, and Zicri. ²⁸All of these descendants of Elpaal (Shaharaim's son) were leaders of their clans according to their genealogies. They all lived in Jerusalem.

²⁹Another descendant of Benjamin was Jeiel. He lived in the city of Gibeon and was an early settler and leader of those who lived there. Jeiel's wife was Maakah. ³⁰His oldest son was Abdon. His other sons were Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab, ³¹Gedor, Ahio, and Zeker.

³²Mikloth (another of Jeiel's sons) was the father of Shimeah. All these descendants of Jeiel also lived in Jerusalem near their relatives.

³³Ner was the father of Kish. Kish was the father of King Saul.

Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal.

³⁴Jonathan's son was Merib-Baal.

Merib-Baal was the father of Micah.

³⁵Micah's sons were Pithon, Melek, Tarea, and Ahaz.

³⁶Ahaz was the father of Jehoaddah.

Jehoaddah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri.

Zimri was the father of Moza.

³⁷Moza was the father of Binea.

Raphah was Binea's son.

Eleasah was Raphah's son.

Azel was Eleasah's son.

³⁸Azel had six sons. Their names were Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. These were all of Azel's sons.

³⁹Azel had a brother, Eshek.

Eshek's oldest son was Ulam. His other sons were Jeush and Eliphelet.

⁴⁰Ulam's sons were archers, capable men who were in the army. Altogether they had 150 sons and grandsons.

All these were the descendants of Benjamin.

Chapter 9

¹The scroll named "The Record of the Kings of Israel" listed the names of all the people of Israel.

The army of Babylon captured many of the people of Judah and took them to Babylon. That happened because of the sins the people of Judah had committed against God. ²The first people who returned to Judah many years later and lived in their own land and in their own cities and towns were some Israelites, priests, other descendants of Levi, and men who worked in the temple.

³Other people from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh also returned to Judah and lived in Jerusalem, including the following people.

⁴Uthai son of Ammihud (Ammihud was Omri's son; Omri was Imri's son; Imri was Bani's son; Bani was a descendant of Perez; Perez was Judah's son);

⁵Asaiah and his sons (who were descendants of Shilon. Asaiah was the oldest son in his family);

⁶Jeuel and others of his relatives (who were from Zerah's clan. There were 690 people in this clan);

⁷and from the tribe of Benjamin, Sallu (Meshullam's son; Meshullam was Hodaviah's son; Hodaviah was Hassenuah's son),

⁸Ibneiah (Jeroham's son),

Elah (Uzzi's son; Uzzi was Mikri's son),

Meshullam (Shephatiah's son; Shephatiah was Reuel's son; Reuel was Ibniyah's son).

⁹In all, there were 956 descendants of Benjamin living in Jerusalem. All these were leaders of their clans.

¹⁰Some of the priests who returned to Judah were:

Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jakin,

¹¹Azariah, the person in charge of those who took care of the temple (Azariah was Hilkiah's son;

Hilkiah was Meshullam's son;

Meshullam was Zadok's son;

Zadok was Meraioth's son;

Meraioth was Ahitub's son),

¹²Adaiah (Jeroham's son;

Jeroham was Pashhur's son;

Pashhur was Malkijah's son),

and Maasai (Adiel's son;

Adiel was Jahzerah's son;

Jahzerah was Meshullam's son;

Meshullam was Meshillemith's son;

Meshillemith was Immer's son).

¹³Altogether there were 1,760 priests who returned to Judah. They were leaders of their clans, and they all were capable and responsible for doing work in the temple of God.

¹⁴From the descendants of Levi who returned to Judah there were: Shemaiah (Hasshub's son;

Hasshub was Azrikam's son;

Azrikam was Hashabiah's son;

Hashabiah was a descendant of Levi's youngest son Merari),

¹⁵Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, Mattaniah (Mika's son;

Mika was Zicri's son;

Zicri was Asaph's son),

¹⁶Obadiah (Shemaiah's son;

Shemaiah was Galal's son;

Galal was Jeduthun's son),

and Berekiah who lived in one of the villages where the Netophath people lived (Berekiah was Asa's son;

Asa was Elkanah's son).

¹⁷From the descendants of Levi who returned to Judah who guarded the temple gates there were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and some of their relatives. Shallum was their leader. ¹⁸Up until the time of this writing, those gatekeepers from the tribe of Levi stood at the King's Gate on the east side of the city.

¹⁹Shallum was Kore's son;

Kore was Ebiasaph's son;

Ebiasaph was Korah's son.

Shallum and his relatives from his clan, the people descended from Korah, had the duty of being gatekeepers, responsible to guard the entrances to the temple of Yahweh, as their ancestors had done.

²⁰Previously Phinehas (Eleazar's son) had supervised the gatekeepers. Yahweh was with Phinehas.

²¹Zechariah (Meshelemiah's son) was a gatekeeper at the temple's entrance.

²²Altogether, there were 212 men chosen to guard the gates. The records of the clans in their villages listed their names. King David and the prophet Samuel appointed those men because those men were dependable. ²³The work of those gatekeepers and their descendants was to guard the gates of Yahweh's temple, also known as the sacred tent. ²⁴There were gatekeepers on each of the four sides of the temple, toward the east, west, north, and south. ²⁵Sometimes it was necessary for the relatives of the gatekeepers who lived in those villages to come and help them. Each time some of them came, they helped the gatekeepers for seven days. ²⁶There were four descendants of Levi who worked every day, and they supervised the gatekeepers. They also took care of the storerooms and other rooms in the temple of God. ²⁷They stayed at the temple because their job was to guard it. Each morning they opened the gates.

²⁸Some of the gatekeepers took care of the various items used in the daily duties of the temple. Their job was to bring those items out for sacrifices each day and to store them again each night. ²⁹Other gatekeepers had the job to take care of the other things in the temple including the flour, wine, olive oil, incense, and spices that were used in the sacrifices. ³⁰But some of the priests had the work of mixing the spices. ³¹There was a descendant of Levi named Mattithiah, the oldest son of Shallum, who was a descendant of Korah. His official duty was to bake the bread that was used in the offerings on the altar. ³²Some of the gatekeepers who were descended from Kohath prepared the new loaves of bread to display before God that were placed on the table inside the temple every Sabbath day.

³³Some of the descendants of Levi were musicians who worked in the temple. The leaders of those families stayed in the rooms of the temple. They did not do any other work in the temple because they they were responsible to serve as musicians day and night.

³⁴Those are the names of the leaders of the clans descended from Levi, according to their genealogies. They all lived in Jerusalem.

³⁵Another descendant of Benjamin was Jeiel. He lived in the city of Gibeon and was an early settler and leader of those who lived there. Jeiel's wife was Maakah.

³⁶His oldest son was Abdon.

His other sons were Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, ³⁷Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth.

³⁸Mikloth (another of Jeiel's sons) was the father of Shimeah. All these descendants of Jeiel also lived in Jerusalem near their relatives.

³⁹Ner was the father of Kish. Kish was the father of King Saul.

Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal.

⁴⁰Jonathan's son was Merib-Baal. Merib-Baal was the father of Micah.

⁴¹Micah's sons were Pithon, Melek, and Tahrea.

⁴²Ahaz was the father of Jarah.

Jarah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri.

Zimri was the father of Moza. ⁴³Moza was the father of Binea.

Rephaiah was Binea's son. Eleasah was Rephaiah's son. Azel was Eleasah's son.

⁴⁴Azel had six sons. Their names were Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. These were all of Azel's sons.

Chapter 10

¹Now, the Philistine army battled the Israelites. The Israelite soldiers ran away from them, and many Israelites died on Mount Gilboa. ²The Philistine soldiers caught up with Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua. ³The fighting was very fierce around Saul. The archers shot Saul, and they wounded him severely.

⁴Saul said to his armor bearer, "Take out your sword and kill me with it, so that these heathen Philistines will not be able to torture me." But his armor bearer refused to do that because he was very scared. So Saul grabbed his own sword and stabbed himself with it and died.

⁵When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also stabbed himself with his own sword and died. ⁶So Saul and his three sons died. So his whole dynasty ended together.

⁷When all the Israelites living in the valley saw that their army had run away and that Saul and his sons were dead, they left their towns and ran away. Then the Philistine soldiers came and occupied those towns.

⁸The next day, when the Philistine soldiers came to take away the possessions of the dead Israelite soldiers, they found Saul and his sons dead on Mount Gilboa. ⁹They took everything from Saul's corpse; they cut off his head and took his equipment. Then they sent messengers throughout their own land, to proclaim the news to their idols and to their people. ¹⁰They put Saul's equipment in the temple to their gods, and they hung his severed head in the temple to their god Dagon.

¹¹Everyone who lived in Jabesh in the region of Gilead heard about everything the Philistines had done to Saul's corpse. ¹²So all the brave men of Jabesh went and got the corpses of Saul and his sons and brought them back to Jabesh. They buried their bodies under the big tree in Jabesh. Then the people of Jabesh fasted for seven days.

¹³Now, Saul died because of his treachery; he betrayed Yahweh by not doing what Yahweh said. Saul even went to a woman who talks to the spirits of dead people and asked her what he should do, ¹⁴instead of asking Yahweh what he should do. So Yahweh caused him to die and appointed David son of Jesse, to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 11

¹Then the people of Israel came to David at the city of Hebron and said to him, "Listen, we have the same ancestors as you. ²In the past, when Saul was our king, you were the one who led our Israelite soldiers in battle. You are the one to whom Yahweh our God promised, 'You will care for my people; you will lead Israel.'"

³So all the Israelite elders came to David at Hebron. There David made an agreement with them with Yahweh as witness. The elders anointed David with oil to set him apart to be the king of the Israelite people, just as Yahweh had previously told the prophet Samuel would happen.

⁴David and all the Israelite soldiers went to Jerusalem. Another name for the city was Jebus because the Jebus people group lived in the area. ⁵The people in the city said to David, "You will not get in here!" But David and his soldiers captured the fortress there named Zion. Another name for it since then is the City of David.

⁶Now, David had said to his soldiers, "Whoever leads our soldiers to defeat the people in Jebus will become the commander of all my army." Joab son of Zeruiah led the soldiers, so he became the commander.

⁷So David moved into the fortress. That is why they named it the City of David. ⁸David's workers rebuilt the city, starting where the land was filled in and extending to the wall that was around the city. Joab's men repaired the other parts of the city. ⁹David became more and more powerful because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, helped him.

¹⁰Together with all Israel, the leaders of David's warriors helped establish David's reign and supported him in becoming king, just as Yahweh had told Israel. ¹¹David's warriors included:

Jashobeam was from the Hachmon clan. He was the leader of the officers. One time he fought against 300 enemies and killed them all with his spear.

¹²Next was Eleazar son of Dodo, from the clan of Ahoh. He was one of David's three elite warriors. ¹³Once he was with David at Pas Dammim when the Philistine soldiers gathered for the battle. There was a field of barley there. At first the Israelite soldiers ran away from the Philistine soldiers, ¹⁴but then they stopped in the middle of the field and fought to defend it. They killed the Philistine soldiers. Yahweh enabled them to win a great victory.

¹⁵One time three of David's 30 greatest warriors came to David when he was camping next to the huge rock outside the cave near Adullam. At that same time, the Philistine army had camped in the Valley of Rephaim.

¹⁶David was then in a fortress, and some of the Philistine soldiers were occupying Bethlehem. ¹⁷One day David longingly said, "I wish that someone would bring me some water from the well near the gate at Bethlehem." ¹⁸So the three greatest warriors forced their way through the Philistine camp and drew some water from that well, and brought it to David. But he would not drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground as an offering to Yahweh.

¹⁹He said, "God would consider it wrong for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of these men and taking their lives, since they were willing to give their lives for me!" So he refused to drink it.

That was one of the things that David's three greatest warriors did.

²⁰Now Joab's brother Abshai was the leader of the three elite warriors, and he gained fame among those three. One time Abshai fought 300 enemies with his spear, and he killed them all. ²¹Among a second group of three elite warriors, he was honored and became their leader, but he was not considered part of the first group of three elite warriors.

²²Jehoiada's son Benaiah was a brave soldier from the city of Kabzeel who did great deeds. He killed two of the best warriors from the Moab people group. One day he went down into a pit in snowy weather and killed a lion. ²³He also killed an Egyptian soldier who was two and one-third meters tall. The Egyptian carried a spear that was as long as a weaver's rod, but Benaiah fought him with a club. Benaiah grabbed the Egyptian's spear and killed him with it.

²⁴Those are some of the things that Benaiah son of Jehoiada did. So he became famous along with the three elite warriors. ²⁵Indeed, he was more honored than the remainder of the 30 warriors, but he did not become a member of the first group of three warriors. David appointed him to be the leader of his bodyguards.

²⁶These are the names of the great warriors:

Asahel, brother of Joab;

Elhanan son of Dodo, from Bethlehem;

²⁷Shammoth, from Haror;

Helez, from Pelon;

²⁸Ira son of Ikkesh, from Tekoa;

Abiezer, from Anathoth;

²⁹Sibbekai, from Hushah;

Ilai from Ahoh;

³⁰Maharai, from Netophah;

Heled son of Baanah, from Netophah;

³¹Ithai, son of Ribai, from Gibeah which belonged to the descendants of Benjamin;

Benaiah, from Pirathon;

³²Hurai, from the valleys near Mount Gaash;

Abiel from Arabah;

³³Azmaveth, from Baharum;

Eliabba, from Shaalbon;

³⁴the sons of Hashem from Gizon;

Jonathan son of Shagee from Harar;

³⁵Ahiam son of Sakar from Harar;

Eliphal son of Ur;

³⁶Hepher from Mekerath;

Ahijah from Pelon;

³⁷Hezro from Carmel;

Naarai son of Ezbai;

³⁸Joel the brother of Nathan;

Mibhar son of Hagri;

³⁹Zelek from the Ammon people group;

Naharai from Beeroth, the armor bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah;

⁴⁰Ira from Jattir; Gareb from Jattir;

⁴¹Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, from the Heth people group;

Zabad son of Ahlai;

⁴²Adina son of Shiza from the tribe of Reuben, a leader from that tribe, who had 30 soldiers with him;

⁴³Hanan son of Maacah;

Joshaphat from Mithna;

⁴⁴Uzzia from Ashterath;

Shama and Jeiel, sons of Hotham, from Aroer.

⁴⁵Jediael son of Shimri

and his brother Joha, from Tiz;

⁴⁶Eliel from Mahavah;

Jeribai and Joshaviah, sons of Elnaam;

Ithmah from Moab;

⁴⁷Eliel and Obed,

and Jaasiel from Zobah.

Chapter 12

¹David stayed in the city of Ziklag when he was escaping from King Saul (Kish's son) and waiting to ascend the throne. While David was there, many warriors came and joined him, and they helped David when he fought battles. These warriors are listed below. ²They carried bows. They were able to shoot arrows and to sling stones. They could use either their right arms or their left arms. They were relatives of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin.

³Their leader was Ahiezer. Next in command was Joash. They were both Shemaah's sons from the city of Gibeah. Others were:

Jeziel and Pelet, Azmaveth's sons;

Berakah;

Jehu from the city of Anathoth;

⁴Ishmaiah from the city of Gibeon, who was the leader of the thirty greatest warriors;

Jeremiah; Jahaziel; Johanan; Jozabad from the city of Gederah;

⁵Eluzai; Jerimoth; Bealiah; Shemariah; Shephatiah from the city of Haruph;

⁶Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, who were all descendants of Korah;

⁷and Joelah and Zebadiah, Jeroham's sons, from the city of Gedor.

⁸Some men from the tribe of Gad east of the Jordan River joined David when he was at his garrison in the caves in the desert. They were brave warriors who were trained for fighting battles and able to use shields and spears well. They were as fierce as lions, and they could run as fast as deer on the hills.

⁹Ezer was their leader.

Next in command was Obadiah.

Next was Eliab.

¹⁰Next was Mishmannah.

Next was Jeremiah.

¹¹Next was Attai.

Next was Eliel.

¹²Next was Johanan.

Next was Elzabad.

¹³Next was another man whose name was Jeremiah.

The last was Macbannai.

¹⁴Those men from the tribe of Gad were commanders in the army. The least warrior could fight 100, and the greatest could fight 1,000. ¹⁵They crossed to the west side of the Jordan River during a certain month in spring, at the time of the year when the river floods. They chased from there all the people who lived in the valleys on both sides of the river.

¹⁶Some other men from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah also came to David in his garrison. ¹⁷David went out of the cave to meet them and said to them, "If you have come peacefully to help me, I am eager to have you join with me. But if you have come to enable my enemies to capture me, even though I have not done anything to harm you, I hope that the God whom our ancestors worshiped will see it and condemn you."

¹⁸Then God's Spirit came on Amasai, who was the leader of the thirty greatest warriors, and Amasai said,

"David, we want to be with you;

you who are the son of Jesse, we will join you.

We do come in peace. We hope you will experience peace and that those helping you will experience peace,

because your God is helping you." So David welcomed those men, and he appointed them to be leaders of his soldiers.

¹⁹Some men from the tribe of Manasseh also joined David when he went with the soldiers of Philistia to fight against Saul's army. But David and his men did not help the army of Philistia because the leaders of Philistia talked about David and his soldiers and sent David and his men away. The leaders of Philistia said, "If David joins his master Saul again, we will all be killed." ²⁰When David went to Ziklag, these were the men from the tribe of Manasseh who went with him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, another man whose name was Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai. Each of them had been a commander of one thousand men from the tribe of Manasseh in Saul's army.

²¹They helped David to fight against the groups of men who roamed throughout the country robbing people

because these men from the tribe of Manasseh were all brave soldiers and became commanders in David's army.

²²Every day more men joined David's men to support David, and his army became large, like the army of God.

²³These are the numbers of soldiers who were ready for battle who joined David at the city of Hebron. They came to help him to become the king of Israel instead of Saul, as Yahweh had promised would happen.

²⁴There were 6,800 men from Judah ready for battle, carrying shields and spears.

²⁵There were 7,100 men from the tribe of Simeon. They were all strong warriors trained to fight battles.

²⁶There were 4,600 men from the tribe of Levi.

²⁷Jehoiada, a leader descended from Aaron, was in that group of descendants of Levi, and there were 3,700 men with him.

²⁸Zadok, a strong young soldier, was also in that group, and there were 22 other leaders from his clan who came with him.

²⁹There were 3,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin who were Saul's relatives. Most of them had previously given their allegiance to Saul and his descendants.

³⁰There were 20,800 men from the tribe of Ephraim who were all brave warriors and famous in their own clans.

³¹There were 18,000 men from the half of the tribe of Manasseh who lived west of the Jordan River. Their half-tribe chose them to go and help David become the king.

³²There were 200 men who were leaders from the tribe of Issachar along with their relatives. They always knew what the Israelites should do, and they knew the right time to do it. The leaders commanded their relatives.

³³There were 50,000 men from the tribe of Zebulun. They were experienced warriors and knew how to use all kinds of weapons well. They were completely loyal to David.

³⁴There were 1,000 officers from the tribe of Naphtali with 37,000 soldiers, each carrying shields and spears.

³⁵There were 28,600 soldiers from the tribe of Dan, all trained to fight battles.

³⁶There were 40,000 soldiers from the tribe of Asher, all trained to fight battles.

³⁷There were also 120,000 soldiers from the area east of the Jordan River who joined David. They were from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh. They had all kinds of weapons for battle.

³⁸All those men were soldiers who joined the ranks of David's army. They came to Hebron wanting very much to enable David to be the king of all of the Israelite people. The remainder of the Israelite people were also united in wanting to make David their king. ³⁹The men spent three days there with David, eating and drinking, because their families gave them food to take with them. ⁴⁰Also, their fellow Israelites came from as far away as the area where the tribes of Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali lived, bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen. They brought a lot of various types of food: flour, fig cakes, raisins, wine, olive oil, cattle and sheep. They brought so much because the people throughout Israel were very joyful.

Chapter 13

¹One day David talked with all his army officers. Some of them were commanders of 100 soldiers and some were commanders of 1,000 soldiers. ²Then David summoned the other Israelite leaders and said to all of them, "If you think it is a good idea, and if it is what Yahweh our God wants, let us send a message to our fellow Israelites throughout our country, including the priests and descendants of Levi who are living among them in their towns

and in the nearby pasturelands, to come and join us. ³Let us bring the sacred chest of our God back to us since we did not ask God what he wanted us to do while Saul was the king.” ⁴All the people agreed with David to send the messages and bring back the sacred chest because they all thought that it was the right thing to do.

⁵So David gathered all the Israelite people, from the Shihor River in Egypt to the city of Lebo Hamath in the north, and told them that he wanted them to help bring the sacred chest of God back to Jerusalem from the city of Kiriath Jearim. ⁶David went with all the Israelite people to the city of Baalah, which is another name for Kiriath Jearim, to get from that city the sacred chest of God, Yahweh. (Baalah was located in the land belonging to the tribe of Judah). The people believed that God sat like a king on a throne between the statues of winged creatures that was above the lid of the sacred chest. The sacred chest belonged to Yahweh.

⁷The people put the sacred chest of God on a new cart and took it from Abinadab’s house. Uzzah and Ahio were guiding the oxen that were pulling the cart. ⁸David and all the Israelite people celebrated with all their strength all around the cart carrying the sacred chest. They were singing, playing lyres, harps, tambourines, and cymbals, and blowing trumpets.

⁹However, when the people and the cart came to the place where Kidon threshed grain, the oxen stumbled. So Uzzah reached out with his hand to prevent the sacred chest from falling off the cart. ¹⁰Yahweh became very angry with Uzzah, and he killed Uzzah because Uzzah had put his hand on the sacred chest. Yahweh had commanded during the time of Moses that no one touch the sacred chest. Uzzah died there in front of the sacred chest.

¹¹David was angry because Yahweh inflicted punishment on Uzzah. David called that place where Uzzah died “The Punishment of Uzzah” (which has continued to be its nickname until the writing of this document).

¹²That day, David was afraid of God. He thought to himself, “(Since God is angry with me,) I cannot bring God’s sacred chest to my city.” ¹³So David and the people did not take the sacred chest to the portion of Jerusalem named the City of David. Instead, they took it to Obed Edom’s house, who was from the city of Gath. ¹⁴The sacred chest of God stayed with Obed Edom’s family in his house for three months. During that time Yahweh blessed Obed Edom’s family and everything that Obed Edom owned.

Chapter 14

¹One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent some messengers to David to talk about making an agreement between their countries. Then Hiram sent cedar logs, bricklayers, and carpenters to build a palace for David.

²When that happened, David knew that Yahweh had truly caused him to be the king of Israel, and that Yahweh had caused the surrounding nations to respect David’s kingdom. Yahweh did this because he loved his Israelite people.

³David married more women in Jerusalem, and those women gave birth to more sons and daughters for him. ⁴The names of the children who were born to him in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ⁵Ibhar, Elishama, Elpelet, ⁶Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁷Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

⁸When the army of Philistia heard that people in Israel appointed David to be king of all of Israel, they went to try to capture him. But David heard that the army of Philistia was coming, so he and his soldiers went out to fight against them. ⁹Now, the army of Philistia had come to the Valley of Rephaim southwest of Jerusalem and had attacked and robbed the people there. ¹⁰So David asked God, “Should my men and I go and attack the army of Philistia? If we go, will you enable us to defeat them?”

Yahweh replied, “Yes, go, and I will enable you to defeat them.”

¹¹The soldiers of Philistia went to a town people now call “Baal Perazim.” David and his men met the soldiers of Philistia there and defeated them. Then David said, “God has completely defeated my enemies by using me and my army. God destroyed them like water breaking a dam.” So they named that place “Baal Perazim,” which meant “The

Lord breaks through.” ¹²As the soldiers of Philistia fled, they left their idols there. So David commanded his soldiers to burn those idols.

¹³But soon the army of Philistia attacked the people in that valley again. ¹⁴So again David prayed to God to ask him what he should do, and God replied, “Do not attack the army of Philistia from the front. Instead, go around them, and attack them from the rear in front of the balsam trees. ¹⁵When you hear something in the tops of the balsam trees that sounds like soldiers marching, that is when you must attack, because I, God, will have gone ahead of you to enable you to defeat the army of Philistia.” ¹⁶So David did what God commanded him to do, and he and his army defeated the army of Philistia, all the way from the city of Gibeon west to the city of Gezer.

¹⁷So David became famous in all the nearby countries, and Yahweh caused the leaders of all the nations to be afraid of him.

Chapter 15

¹David commanded his workers to build houses for himself in the section of Jerusalem named the City of David. He also told them to set up a place in which to put the sacred chest of God. They put up a large tent for the sacred chest. ²Then David said, “No one but the descendants of Levi may carry God’s sacred chest, because Yahweh chose them to carry it and to serve him forever.”

³David summoned all the people of Israel to come to Jerusalem. He wanted a celebration when the Levites brought the sacred chest of Yahweh to the place his workers set up for it. ⁴David summoned the descendants of Aaron, who was the first high priest, and the other descendants of Levi:

⁵from the descendants of Kohath, Levi’s second son, Uriel the leader and his relatives, 120 in all;

⁶from the descendants of Merari, Levi’s third son, Asaiah the leader and his relatives, 220 in all;

⁷from the descendants of Gershon, Levi’s first son, Joel the leader and his relatives, 130 in all;

⁸from the descendants of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the leader and his relatives, 200 in all;

⁹from the descendants of Hebron, Eliel the leader and his relatives, 80 in all;

¹⁰from the descendants of Uzziel, Amminadab the leader and his relatives, 112 in all.

¹¹David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar and these descendants of Levi: Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. ¹²David said to them, “You are the leaders of the clans descended from Levi. You and your family members must ceremonially purify yourselves, in order to be able to do this special work for Yahweh. You must bring the sacred chest of Yahweh, the God of us Israelites, to the place that I set up for it here in Jerusalem.

¹³The first time that we tried to bring it, you descendants of Levi were not the ones who carried it, since we did not follow Yahweh’s command in the law of Moses regarding carrying the sacred chest. So Yahweh our God punished us.”

¹⁴Then the priests and the descendants of Levi performed the rituals to purify themselves, in order that it would be proper for them to carry the sacred chest of Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. ¹⁵Just as the law of Moses said, according to the command of Yahweh, the descendants of Levi fastened poles to God’s sacred chest and carried it by putting the poles on their shoulders.

¹⁶David told the leaders of the descendants of Levi to appoint some of their relatives to sing and play lyres, harps, and cymbals, making joyful music while they were carrying the sacred chest.

¹⁷So they appointed Heman and his relatives Asaph and Ethan. Heman was the son of Joel. Asaph was the son of Berechiah. Ethan was the son of Kushaiah and was a descendant of Merari. ¹⁸They also appointed another group

of relatives from the descendants of Levi: Zechariah, Ben, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, and two of the temple gatekeepers, Obed Edom and Jeiel.

¹⁹Heman, Asaph and Ethan sang and also played bronze cymbals. ²⁰Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah played harps according to a certain musical style. ²¹Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed Edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah played lyres according to a different musical style. ²²Kenaniah, the leader of the descendants of Levi in music, directed the singing because he was very capable.

²³Berechiah and Elkanah were two of the men who guarded the sacred chest. ²⁴The priests Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer were the ones who blew trumpets in front of God's sacred chest. Obed Edom and Jehiah also guarded the sacred chest.

²⁵So David, the Israelite leaders, and the officers who commanded one thousand soldiers went to get the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel. They joyfully got the sacred chest from Obed Edom's house. ²⁶Indeed, God helped the descendants of Levi who carried the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel. Therefore David and the leaders sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams to thank him. ²⁷David, all the descendants of Levi who carried the sacred chest, all the singers, and Kenaniah, the man who directed those who sang, wore robes of fine linen. David also wore a waistcloth made of linen. ²⁸So all of the Israelite people joined in bringing up to Jerusalem the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel. They shouted joyfully, blew horns and trumpets, and played cymbals, lyres, and harps.

²⁹While they were bringing the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel to the section of Jerusalem named the city of David, Michal (the first of David's wives and Saul's daughter) watched them, looking out of a window. When she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him.

Chapter 16

¹They brought God's sacred chest to Jerusalem and put it inside the special tent that David's workers set up. Then they brought offerings which they fully burned on the altar and other offerings commemorating friendship between them and God. They offered the offerings in front of the special tent which housed the sacred chest.

²When the priests finished presenting all those offerings, David asked Yahweh to bless the Israelite people. ³David ordered his servants to give a loaf of bread, a baked good with dates, and a baked good with raisins to every Israelite who was there, both men and women.

⁴Then David appointed some of the descendants of Levi to stand in front of the special tent in which the descendants of Levi placed Yahweh's sacred chest, to lead the people who worshiped and thanked and praised Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. ⁵Asaph was their leader. Zechariah was his assistant. The other descendants of Levi who helped were Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom, and Jeiel. They played harps and lyres, and Asaph played cymbals. ⁶Benaiah and Jahaziel were priests who blew trumpets frequently in front of the special tent in which the descendants of Levi placed the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between God and the people of Israel.

⁷On that day, David first gave to Asaph and his helpers this song to praise Yahweh:

⁸Thank Yahweh and pray to him.

Tell the people of all nations what he has done.

⁹Sing to him; sing songs to praise him.

Tell about all his miraculous deeds.

¹⁰Be glad that he is holy.

Those who follow Yahweh should rejoice.

¹¹Ask Yahweh to help you and give you his strength.

Frequently pray to him!

¹²Think about the wonderful things that he has done,
the miracles he has done, and the just laws that he has decreed.

¹³We are the offspring of his servant Israel;
we are the descendants of Jacob whom he has chosen.

¹⁴Yahweh is our God.

People throughout the world know his just laws.

¹⁵Think about for all of your life the agreement that he made;
he made a promise that will last for 1,000 generations.

¹⁶That is the agreement that he made with Abraham,
and God repeated that promise to Isaac, Abraham's son.

¹⁷God continued the agreement for Isaac's son, Jacob, as a decree;
as a promise to Israel and his descendants for all time.

¹⁸God said, "I will give the region of Canaan to you,
to belong to you and your descendants."

¹⁹When there were hardly any of your ancestors,
just a tiny group of people who were living in that land like strangers,

²⁰they continued to wander from one place to another,
from one kingdom to another.

²¹God did not allow others to oppress them,
and he warned kings on your ancestors' behalf by saying to them,

²²"Do not harm the people whom I have chosen!
Do not wrong my prophets!"

²³You people throughout the world, sing to Yahweh.
Every day proclaim to others that he has saved us.

²⁴Tell among the nations that he is great;
tell all the people groups the marvelous things that he has done;

²⁵because Yahweh is great, and he deserves praise very much.
Everyone should revere him more than all the gods,

²⁶because all the gods that the other people groups worship are idols with no value,
but Yahweh is truly great; he created the skies.

²⁷Magnificence and grandeur come from where he is.
Power and joy come from the place where he lives.

²⁸You people in nations all over the world, praise Yahweh!
Praise Yahweh for his glorious power!

²⁹Attribute to Yahweh the glory his name deserves.
Come to his place of worship with offerings to give to him!
Bow down and worship Yahweh because he is holy and his holiness shines out from him with wonderful beauty.

³⁰You people throughout the world, be reverent and respectful when you are in his place of worship because of his sheer power.

As one example, he put the earth firmly in its place; nothing ever will be able to move it.

³¹Everything in the sky should celebrate and everything on the earth should cheer.
Everything in the sky and on the earth declare to all the people groups of the world, "Yahweh is king!"

³²The oceans and all the creatures in the oceans should shout;
the fields and everything in them should rejoice.

³³When that happens, the trees in the forest should cheer in front of Yahweh,
because he will come to judge everyone on the earth.

³⁴Thank Yahweh, because everything he does shows he is good,
because he faithfully loves us always.

³⁵Say to him, "God who provides our liberation, rescue us,
and bring us together and save us from the armies of other nations,
so that we will thank you for your sacred character and reputation,
and revel in giving you praise."

³⁶Yahweh, the God of us Israelite people, deserves praise,
for all time, in the past and in the future.

After the people finished singing that song, they all said "We agree!", and they praised Yahweh. ³⁷Then David left Asaph and the other members of his clan there in front of the tent where the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel was. David told them that they must do their work there every day. ³⁸David also left Obed Edom and other descendants of Levi to work there, 68 in all. Hosah and Obed Edom, Jeduthun's son, guarded the entrances of the sacred tent.

³⁹David also told Zadok the high priest and the other priests who worked with him to remain in front of Yahweh's sacred tent, at the place where the Israelite people worshiped Yahweh there in the city of Gibeon. ⁴⁰Every morning and every evening they burned offerings to Yahweh on the altar for such offerings, obeying the rules Moses wrote

down, the rules that Yahweh gave to the Israelite people. ⁴¹With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the other descendants of Levi whom David chose specifically. They sang songs to praise Yahweh because he faithfully loves his people forever. ⁴²Heman and Jeduthun led the music, including those playing trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments for singing to God. Jeduthun's sons guarded the gates of the sacred tent.

⁴³Then all the people left. They all returned to their homes, and David returned home to ask Yahweh to bless his family.

Chapter 17

¹After David began to live in his palace, he said to the prophet Nathan, "It does not seem right that I am living in a palace made of cedar wood, but the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel stays inside a tent!"

²Nathan replied to David, "Everything you are thinking about doing, do it, because God is with you."

³But that night God spoke to Nathan. He said,

⁴"Go and tell my servant David this is what I, Yahweh, am saying to him: 'You will not build a temple for me to live in, ⁵since I have not lived in any building from the day that I brought the people of Israel up out of Egypt until now. Rather, I have lived in my sacred tent, moving from one place to another when the Israelites moved around.

⁶Wherever I went with all the Israelites as they traveled, I never said to any of their leaders whom I appointed to lead them, "Why have you not built me a temple made of cedar wood?"

⁷Therefore, this is what you should say to my servant David: "Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, says, 'I took you from a pasture where you were taking care of sheep, and I appointed you to be the ruler of Israel, my people. ⁸I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have removed all your enemies who opposed you. Now, I will cause you to become very famous, as well known as the names of the greatest men who have ever lived on the earth. ⁹⁻¹⁰Formerly, during the time that I appointed leaders for my Israelite people, many violent groups oppressed them. But this will not happen anymore. I have chosen a place where my Israelite people can live peacefully and no one will disturb them anymore. I will give them rest from being attacked by their enemies. And I will defeat all your enemies.

I declare to you that I, Yahweh, will enable your descendants to rule after you die. ¹¹When your life ends and you die and go to be with your ancestors who have died, I will appoint one of your descendants, one of your sons, to become king, and I will enable his kingdom to be strong. ¹²He is the one who will lead the building of a temple for me. And I will make his ruling dynasty last forever. ¹³I will be like a father to him, and he will be like a son to me. I stopped giving faithful love to Saul, the one who was the king before you became king, but I will never stop giving faithful love to your son. ¹⁴I will cause him and his descendants to rule over my people and my kingdom forever. His ruling dynasty will last forever."

¹⁵So Nathan reported to David everything that Yahweh had revealed to him.

¹⁶Then King David went into the tent housing the sacred chest, sat in the presence of Yahweh, and prayed this prayer:

"Yahweh my God, I am certainly not worthy for you to have done of all these things for me, and my family is not worthy, either.

¹⁷And O God, now, in addition to everything else, you have spoken about what will happen to my descendants in the future for many generations. Yahweh my God, you have acted toward me as though I was the most important man on the earth!

¹⁸I, David, cannot say anything more to you in exchange for you honoring me. Yahweh, you know what kind of person I am. ¹⁹Yahweh, you have done these great things for my sake, according to the way you wanted, and in order to reveal all of these great things.

²⁰Yahweh, there is no one like you. You are the only true God. This is what we have always heard. ²¹And there is no nation like Israel because Israel is the only nation on the earth whose people you went out to rescue to make them your people, to perform miracles and show how great and awesome you are, and to expel the people of other people groups in Canaan who were before your people, the Israelites, whom you rescued from being slaves in Egypt. ²²You caused us your Israelite people to belong to you as your people forever, and you, Yahweh, became our God!

²³And now Yahweh, I pray that you will cause the things that you have promised about me and my descendants to be fulfilled forever, and do the things that you have said that you would do. ²⁴I pray that those things will happen so people will celebrate your excellent reputation forever. People will exclaim, 'Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is the God of Israel. He is the God who rules Israel!' You will cause my descendants to be the king of the people you rule,

²⁵because you, my God, have revealed to me that you will cause me to have a ruling dynasty. So I am brave enough to pray like this to you. ²⁶Now, Yahweh, you are God! You have promised to do these good things for me. ²⁷And now you have promised to bless my descendants, in order that they will forever be king over the people you rule. Indeed, you, Yahweh, have given your blessing, and you will keep blessing them forever."

Chapter 18

¹Some time later, David's army attacked and defeated the army of Philistia, subduing them. They captured the Philistine city of Gath and its surrounding villages.

²His army also defeated the army of the Moab people group, so the Moab people group had to accept David as their ruler. They had to pay money each year to David's government, in order that David's army would protect them.

³David's army also fought and defeated the army of Hadadezer, the king of the region of Zobah in Aram near the city of Hamath, when Hadadezer was trying to establish control over the area near the Euphrates River. ⁴David's army captured 1,000 of Hadadezer's chariots, 7,000 chariot drivers, and 20,000 infantry soldiers. David's army hamstringed most of Hadadezer's horses; there were only 100 horses that they did not cripple.

⁵When the army of Aram came from the city of Damascus to fight alongside Hadadezer's army, David's army killed 22,000 soldiers from the army of Aram. ⁶Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in Damascus. So the people of Aram had to accept David as their ruler. They had to pay money each year to David's government, in order that David's army would protect them. Yahweh enabled David's army to win battles everywhere they went.

⁷David's soldiers took the gold shields that Hadadezer's soldiers carried and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸They also brought from Tebah and Kun, two cities that belonged to Hadadezer, a lot of bronze, which David's son Solomon later used to make the huge bronze basin called "The Sea" and the pillars and other bronze items for the temple.

⁹When Tou, the king of the city of Hamath in Aram, heard that David's army had defeated the entire army of King Hadadezer of Zobah in Aram, ¹⁰he sent his son Hadoram to King David, to greet him and congratulate him about his fighting and defeating Hadadezer's army because Tou's army had been fighting Hadadezer's. Hadoram brought to David many items made of gold, silver, and bronze,

¹¹and King David dedicated those things to Yahweh, like he had done with the silver and gold that his soldiers had taken from other nations: the Edom, Moab, and Ammon people groups, the people from Philistia, and from the descendants of Amalek.

¹²The army of David's military commander Abishai, whose mother was Zeruiah, killed 18,000 soldiers from Edom in the Valley of Salt. ¹³Then David stationed groups of his soldiers there in Edom, and the people of Edom had to accept David as their ruler. Yahweh protected David and his army wherever they traveled.

¹⁴David ruled over all the Israelite people, and he always did for them what was just and fair. ¹⁵Joab son of Zeruiah was the chief army commander. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the record keeper. ¹⁶Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests. Shavsha was the official secretary. ¹⁷Benaiah son of Jehoiada led the Kereth and Peleth people groups who were David's bodyguards. David's sons were his most important officials.

Chapter 19

¹Some time later, Nahash, the king of the Ammon people group, died. Then his son Hanun became their king.

²When David heard about that, he thought to himself, "Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son." So David sent some officials there to tell Hanun that David was sorry to hear that Hanun's father had died.

But when David's officials came to Hanun in the land where the Ammonite people group lived to deliver the message, ³the leaders of the Ammon people group said to Hanun, "David is not really honoring your father's memory by sending these men to give his condolences. We think that his men have come to look around our land in order to determine how his army can conquer us."

⁴Hanun believed what the leaders said; so he commanded some soldiers to seize David's officials. Hanun's soldiers insulted the officials by shaving off their beards and cutting off the lower part of their robes. Then Hanun sent David's officials away.

⁵The officials left and were greatly humiliated. When David found out about what had happened to his officials, he sent some messengers to them to tell them, "Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown again, and then return home."

⁶Then the leaders of the Ammon people group realized that they had greatly insulted David. So Hanun and some of his officials sent 33,000 kilograms of silver to hire chariots and chariot drivers from the regions of Aram Naharaim, Aram Maacah and Zobah northeast of Israel. ⁷They hired 32,000 chariots and chariot drivers, as well as the king of the region of Maacah and his army. They came and set up their tents near the city of Medeba in the region of Moab. The soldiers from the Ammon people group also marched out from their cities and were ready for battle.

⁸When David heard about that, he sent Joab and all his army. ⁹The soldiers of the Ammon people group came out of their city and lined up for battle at the entrance of their city. Meanwhile, the other kings who had come with their armies stood in their positions in the open fields.

¹⁰Joab saw that there were groups of enemy soldiers in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he selected some of the best Israelite troops and put them in positions to fight against the soldiers of Aram. ¹¹He appointed his older brother Abishai to be the commander of his other soldiers and he told them to stand in their positions in front of the army of the Ammon people group. ¹²Joab said to them, "If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for us to defeat them, then your soldiers must come and help us. But if the soldiers from the Ammon people group are too strong for you to defeat them, then my soldiers will come and help your men. ¹³We must be strong and fight hard to defend our people and our cities that belong to our God. Yahweh will do what he considers to be good."

¹⁴So Joab and his troops advanced to fight the army of Aram; and the soldiers from Aram ran away from Joab and his soldiers. ¹⁵And when the soldiers of the Ammon people group saw that the soldiers from Aram were running away, they also started to run away from Abishai and his army, and they retreated back inside the city. So Joab and his army returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁶After the leaders of the army of Aram realized that the army of Israel had defeated them, the leaders of the army of Aram sent messengers to another part of Aram on the east side of the Euphrates river, and brought troops from there to the battle area, with Shophak, the commander of Hadadezer's army, leading them.

¹⁷When David heard about that, he gathered all the Israelite soldiers, and they crossed the Jordan River. They advanced against the army of Aram and took their battle positions to attack them. With David's army on the battle field ready to fight, the army of Aram attacked David's army. ¹⁸But the army of Aram ran away from the soldiers of Israel. However, David's soldiers killed 7,000 of their chariot drivers and 40,000 infantry soldiers. They also killed Shophak, their army commander.

¹⁹When the kings who had been subjects of Hadadezer realized that the Israelite army had defeated them, they made peace with David, and agreed to have him rule over them.

So the rulers of Aram did not want to help the rulers of the Ammon people group anymore.

Chapter 20

¹In that region, kings usually went with their armies to fight their enemies in the springtime. But the following year, David did not do that. Instead, he stayed in Jerusalem and sent his commander Joab to lead the army. Joab and his troops ruined the land of the Ammon people group. Then they went to Rabbah, the capital city, and surrounded it. Joab and his troops killed the army in the city of Rabbah and demolished the city. ²David then came to Rabbah, took the crown from the head of the king of Rabbah and put it on his own head. It weighed thirty-three kilograms and was gold. It had a valuable stone in it. They also took many other valuable things from the city. ³Then they brought the people out of the city and forced them to work for their army, using saws and iron picks and axes. David's soldiers did this in all the cities of the Ammon people group. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

⁴Some time later, David's army fought with the army of Philistia, at the city of Gezer. During the battle Sibbekai, from the Hushah clan, killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the Rapha giants. So David's army defeated the army of Philistia.

⁵In another battle against the soldiers of Philistia, Elhanan son of Jair, killed Lahmi, the younger brother of the giant Goliath from the city of Gath, who had a spear which was as thick as a weaver's rod.

⁶There was another battle near Gath. A huge man was there who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was also a descendant of the Rapha giants. ⁷When he insulted the soldiers of Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea killed him. Shimea was one of David's older brothers.

⁸Those were some of the descendants of the Rapha giants who had lived in Gath. David and his soldiers killed them.

Chapter 21

¹An opponent decided to cause the Israelite people to have trouble. So he provoked David to find out how many men in Israel were able to be in the army.

²So David commanded Joab and the other army commanders, "Go out and count all the men in Israel who are able to be in the army. Start at Beersheba in the south and go all the way to Dan in the north. Then come back and report to me, in order that I may know how many men there are."

³But Joab replied, "Your Majesty, I hope that Yahweh will make our army a hundred times larger than it is now. But we all serve you. So you should not commit this sin, your Highness, and make Israel suffer for it."

⁴But David would not change his mind. So Joab and his soldiers went everywhere in Israel and in Judah, and counted the people. Then they returned to Jerusalem, ⁵and they reported to David that there were 1,100,000 men in Israel who could be in the army, and 470,000 men in Judah who could be in the army. ⁶However, Joab did not count the men from the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, because he was disgusted with what the king had commanded.

⁷David's command to count the people caused God to become angry, so he told David that he had decided to punish the people of Israel. ⁸Then David prayed to God, "What I did was very foolish. I committed a terrible sin by what I have done. So now I plead with you, please forgive me."

⁹Then Yahweh said to Gad, David's prophet, ¹⁰"Go and tell this to David: 'Yahweh says, "I am allowing you to choose one of three things to punish you. I will do whichever one you choose.'"

¹¹So Gad went to David and said to him, "Yahweh says: 'You can choose one of these punishments: ¹²either three years of famine in Israel, or three months during which your armies will run away from their enemies who will attack and overrun them with swords, or three days of direct punishment from me during which I will send my angel to cause many people in the country to die because of a plague.' So you must decide what I will say to answer Yahweh, the one who sent me."

¹³David replied to Gad, "I am very distressed. Allow Yahweh to punish me, because he is very merciful, and do not allow humans to punish me."

¹⁴So Yahweh sent a plague on the people of Israel, and 70,000 Israelite people died because of the plague. ¹⁵And God sent an angel to kill the people in Jerusalem with the plague. While the angel was killing people, Yahweh saw all the suffering that the people had endured and decided to stop the killing. So he said to the angel when the angel was standing at the place where Ornan, from the Jebus people group, threshed grain, "Stop what you are doing! That is enough!"

¹⁶David looked up and saw the angel whom Yahweh had sent, standing between the sky and the ground. The angel had a sword in his hand that he pointed toward Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of the city, who were wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, prostrated themselves on the ground.

¹⁷David prayed to God, "I am the one who ordered the census of the men who could be in the army. I am the one who has sinned and done what is wrong, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So Yahweh my God, punish me and my family, but do not allow this plague to continue to cause your people to become sick and die."

¹⁸Then the angel whom Yahweh had sent told Gad to tell David to go up to the place where Ornan threshed grain and build an altar to worship Yahweh there. ¹⁹So after Gad told David, he obeyed the message that Yahweh had given to Gad, and he went up there.

²⁰While Ornan was threshing some wheat, he turned and saw the angel. His four sons who were with him also saw the angel, and they hid themselves. ²¹Then David approached the place where Ornan was. When Ornan saw him, Ornan left the place where he was threshing grain and prostrated himself in front of David, with his face touching the ground.

²²David said to Ornan, "Sell me this threshing place so I can build an altar here to worship Yahweh, in order that he will stop this plague. I will pay the full price."

²³Ornan answered David, "Take it! Your Majesty, do whatever you want to. I will even give you the oxen that thresh the grain for a fully burnt offering on the altar, the threshing boards to use as wood on the altar, and the flour for a flour offering. I will provide everything."

²⁴But King David said to Ornan, "No, I must pay you the full price, because I will not take things that belong to you and offer them to Yahweh as a fully burnt offering when they cost me nothing."

²⁵So David paid Ornan six and one-half kilograms of gold for the whole area. ²⁶David built an altar to worship Yahweh there, and he offered on the altar fully burnt sacrifices and sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh. David prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh answered by sending a fire from heaven to burn up the offerings on the altar.

²⁷Then Yahweh told the angel to put his sword back into its sheath. So the angel did that. ²⁸And when David saw that Yahweh had answered him there at the place where Ornan threshed grain and had ended the plague, he offered sacrifices there. ²⁹At that time, Yahweh's sacred tent, which Moses had commanded others to build in the wilderness, and the altar for burning sacrifices completely, were on a hill used for worship near the city of Gibeon.

³⁰But David did not want to go there to request God to tell him what he wanted David to do, because he was afraid that the angel sent from Yahweh might strike him with his sword.

Chapter 22

¹David realized that this was the place that Yahweh now wanted sacrifices to be made and announced, "Here, at the edge of Jerusalem, is where we will build the temple for our God Yahweh, and where we will make the altar for fully burning the offerings that the Israelite people will bring."

²So David commanded that the foreigners who lived in Israel must assemble together. When they did that, he appointed some of those men to cut huge stones from the quarries and to smooth their surfaces for use in building the temple of God. ³David provided a lot of iron for making nails and hinges for the doors in the gates of the temple. He also provided a huge amount of bronze for making various things. There was so much bronze, no one could weigh it all. ⁴David also provided money for buying a lot of cedar logs for use in building the temple. Men from the cities of Tyre and Sidon brought the logs to David that he purchased. Because they brought so many logs, no one could count them.

⁵David provided all those things because he thought, "My son Solomon is still young and he does not yet know what he needs to know about building buildings, and the temple constructed for Yahweh must be magnificent. It must be a glorious building that will become famous, and people throughout the world must consider it beautiful. So now I will begin to prepare for its construction." So David collected a great amount of building materials before he died.

⁶Then David summoned his son Solomon and told him to arrange for the construction of a temple for Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshipped. ⁷David told Solomon, "My son, I wanted to build a temple to honor Yahweh, my God. ⁸But Yahweh told a prophet to tell me, 'You have killed many men in the big battles that you have fought. I have seen all the people you have killed, so you will not be the one who will arrange for the construction of a temple to honor me. ⁹But you will have a son who will be king of Israel after you. He will be a man without war during his reign. I will cause peace between him and his enemies who are in all the nearby lands. That is why his name will be Solomon (which sounds like the word for peace). During the time that he is king, I will provide peace and safety for the people in Israel. ¹⁰He is the one who will arrange for the construction of a temple to honor me. He will be like a son to me, and I will be like his father. I will cause his dynasty to rule over Israel forever.'

¹¹So now, my son, I hope that Yahweh will help you and enable you to succeed in arranging for the construction of a temple for Yahweh, your God, which is what he said that you would do. ¹²I also hope that he will enable you to be wise and to understand what you need to know, and enable you to obey his laws while you rule over Israel. ¹³If you carefully obey all the laws and decrees which Yahweh told Moses to tell Israel to do, then you will do well in constructing a temple and ruling Israel. Now, demonstrate strength and courage. Do not be afraid of anything, and do not become discouraged!

¹⁴I have tried hard to provide materials for building the temple of Yahweh, including 3,300 metric tons of gold, 33,000 metric tons of silver, and a very large amount of iron and bronze (so much that no one can weigh it all). I have also gathered lumber and stone, but you will need to acquire more of those things. ¹⁵There are many men in Israel who have good ability to cut big stones and work with different types of stone, carpenters, and men who are very skilled at making various kinds of things. ¹⁶There are many men who know how to make things from gold,

silver, bronze, and iron. So now I say to you, begin the work of building the temple, and I hope that Yahweh will be with you.”

¹⁷Then David commanded that all the Israelite leaders must assist his son Solomon: ¹⁸“Yahweh our God is certainly with you. He has allowed you to have peace with all the nearby nations because he has enabled my army to conquer them. Yahweh and my people control them. ¹⁹Now you must obey your God, Yahweh, with your entire lives. Help Solomon to arrange for the construction of the temple for Yahweh God, in order that you can bring the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel and the other sacred items that belong to God into the temple that you will build to honor him.”

Chapter 23

¹David was a very old man when he appointed his son Solomon to be the next king over Israel.

²David gathered the leaders of Israel and the priests and other descendants of Levi. ³He commanded some of his officials to count the descendants of Levi who were at least 30 years old, and they found out that there were 38,000 men. ⁴Then David said, “From those descendants of Levi, I want 24,000 of them to supervise the work at the temple of Yahweh, 6,000 to be officials and judges, ⁵4,000 to be guards at the gates, and 4,000 to praise Yahweh, using the musical instruments that I have provided for them.”

⁶David divided the descendants of Levi into three groups; each group consisted of men who were descendants of one of the three sons of Levi—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

⁷The descendants of Gershon were Ladan and Shimei.

⁸Ladan had three sons: the oldest Jehiel, then Zetham and Joel.

⁹Shimei had three sons: Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran.

They were leaders of the clans of Ladan.

¹⁰Shimei’s sons were Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah; four in total.

¹¹Jahath was the oldest son. Ziza was the second.

Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, so the officials counting the descendants of Levi counted the families of Jeush and Beriah as though they were one family.

¹²Kohath had four sons: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹³Amram’s sons were Aaron and Moses.

Yahweh chose Aaron, that is, Aaron and his descendants perpetually, to dedicate to Yahweh the very holy things, to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, to serve in his presence, and to declare to the people what Yahweh would do to bless them. They were to do those things forever.

¹⁴The officials counting the descendants of Levi counted the descendants of Moses, the man who served God well, as part of the tribe of Levi.

¹⁵Moses’ sons were Gershom and Eliezer.

¹⁶The oldest son of Gershom was Shubael.

¹⁷Eliezer’s oldest child was Rehabiah.

Eliezer had no other sons, but Rehabiah had many sons.

¹⁸Izhar's oldest son was Shelomith.

¹⁹Hebron had four sons.

Jeriah was his oldest son; Amariah was the second; Jahaziel was the third; and Jekameam was the fourth.

²⁰Uzziel had two sons.

Micah was the older son, and Isshiah was the younger.

²¹Merari had two sons: Mahli and Mushi.

Mahli's sons were Eleazar and Kish.

²²Eleazar died without having sons; he only had daughters. Their cousins, Kish's sons, married them.

²³Mushi had three sons: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

²⁴Those were the descendants of Levi that the officials counted according to the descendants' families and the leaders of those families, as well as according to the descendants' special jobs and the leaders of those jobs. They all worked in the temple of Yahweh. The officials counted each person who was at least 20 years old. ²⁵David had said previously, "Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelite people belong, has enabled us to have peace, and he has come to live in Jerusalem forever. ²⁶Therefore, the descendants of Levi no longer need to carry the sacred tent and all the items used in the work there." ²⁷Obedying David's final instructions before he died, instructions for doing the work at the temple, the officials counted the descendants of Levi who were at least twenty years old.

²⁸The work of those descendants of Levi was to assist the descendants of Aaron in their work in Yahweh's temple. They were in charge of the temple courtyards and the side rooms, the ceremonies for purifying all the sacred things, and to do other work at the temple. ²⁹They were also in charge of the loaves of bread the priests placed each week on the table in the temple, the flour for the flour offerings, the wafers that were made without yeast, and the baking pans. The descendants of Levi also had to measure the ingredients, mix them, and bake the bread and wafers. ³⁰Another responsibility for the Levites was to stand every morning at the temple and thank Yahweh and praise him. They needed to do the same thing every evening as well. ³¹And they needed to do the same thing at the presentation of fully burnt offerings to Yahweh on Sabbath days and during the new moon celebrations and other religious festivals. There were specific regulations about how many of them should be there and what they should do each time they served at Yahweh's temple.

³²So the descendants of Aaron, their fellow Israelites, assigned the descendants of Levi certain responsibilities at the place where the Israelite people worshiped Yahweh. The descendants of Levi did that work at the sacred tent and in the holy place inside the tent.

Chapter 24

¹These are the divisions of the descendants of Aaron the first high priest: Aaron's four sons were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²But Nadab and Abihu died before their father died, and they had no children. So their younger brothers Eleazar and Ithamar became priests. ³Zadok, who was a descendant of Eleazar, and Ahimelech, who was a descendant of Ithamar, helped David to separate the family groups into two groups. Each group had certain duties. ⁴There were more leaders among the descendants of Eleazar than there were among the descendants of Ithamar. So they appointed 16 leaders from Eleazar's descendants and eight leaders from Ithamar's descendants. ⁵There were temple officials and priests there, including descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar, to make sure that the work was equitable between the groups. So they decided what work each group would do by casting lots.

⁶Shemaiah son of Nethanel, who was an official secretary and a descendant of Levi, wrote down the names of the leaders of each group while David and his officials were watching. Zadok, the high priest, and Ahimelech son of Abiathar, and the leaders of the families of the priests and of the families of the other descendants of Levi also watched. The lots alternated between the two groups, starting with a family who descended from Eleazar then a family who descended from Ithamar. Once the eight leaders from families descended from Ithamar received their duties, the remaining duties went to leaders of families descended from Eleazar.

⁷Jehoiarib received the first lot cast.

Jedaiah received the next lot.

⁸Next was Harim,
then Seorim.

⁹Next was Malkijah,
then Mijamin.

¹⁰Next was Hakkoz,
then Abijah.

¹¹Next was Jeshua,
then Shecaniah.

¹²Next was Eliashib.
then Jakim.

¹³Next was Huppah,
then Jeshebeab.

¹⁴Next was Bilgah,
then Immer.

¹⁵The remaining leaders descended from Eleazar. The 17th lot went to Hezir.
Next was Happizziez.

¹⁶Next was Pethahiah,
then Jehezkel.

¹⁷Next was Jakin,
then Gamul.

¹⁸Next was Delaiah,
then Maaziah was the last.

¹⁹Those were the men selected to be the leaders of the groups that would serve in Yahweh's temple, obeying the regulations that Aaron their ancestor gave, regulations which Yahweh, the God the Israelite people worship, had given to him.

²⁰This is a list of some of the other descendants of Levi:

From the sons of Amram there was Shubael.

From the sons of Shubael there was Jehdeiah.

²¹From Rehabiah and from the sons of Rehabiah there was Isshiah, his oldest son.

²²From the descendants of Kohath's son Izhar there was Shelomoth.

From the descendants of Shelomoth there was Jahath.

²³From the descendants of Kohath's son Hebron there was his oldest son Jeriah and Amariah the second-born. Jahaziel was the third son, and Jekameam was the fourth son.

²⁴From the descendants of Kohath's son Uzziel there was Micah.

From the descendants of Micah there was Shamir.

²⁵And Micah's younger brother was Isshiah.

From the descendants of Isshiah there was Zechariah.

²⁶The sons of Merari were Mahli, Mushi, and Jaaziah. Jaaziah's first son was Beno.

²⁷In Merari's family line, from the descendants of Jaaziah, there were Beno, Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri.

²⁸Mahli's son Eleazar did not have any sons.

²⁹From the descendants of Kish there was his son Jerahmeel.

³⁰The sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

Those were descendants of Levi who were listed according to the leaders of their families. ³¹These men also decided the jobs they would do by casting lots just like their fellow Israelites the descendants of Aaron, did. They cast lots while King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the leaders of the families of the priests and the other descendants of Levi watched. The families of each oldest brother received the same treatment as those of the youngest.

Chapter 25

¹David and some of the temple officials chose some of the descendants of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to be in charge of teaching through song with harps, lyres, and cymbals. This is a list of the men whom they chose for that work:

²From Asaph's family, they chose Asaph's sons Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Aserelah. Asaph supervised them. The king appointed Asaph to teach through song.

³From Jeduthun's family, they chose six sons of Jeduthun including Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah. Jeduthun supervised them and also taught through song, playing his harp while he thanked and praised Yahweh.

⁴From Heman's family they chose the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Eze, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth. ⁵They were all sons of Heman, who was King David's prophet. God promised to cause Heman to be strong. God gave him 14 sons and three daughters.

⁶The fathers of all those men supervised the men while they played music in the temple of Yahweh. They played cymbals, harps, and lyres for their temple duty. The king supervised their fathers—Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

⁷Those men and their relatives were skilled in playing musical instruments and learned the music for playing songs to Yahweh in the temple. In all, there were 288 of them. ⁸All of them, including younger men and older men and those with experience and those without experience, cast lots to determine what work they would do.

⁹The first lot went to the family of Asaph, to his son Joseph and Joseph's sons and relatives, 12 in all. Next, to Gedaliah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁰Next, to Zaccur and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹¹Next, to Izri and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹²Next, to Nethaniah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹³Next, to Bukkiah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁴Next, to Jesarelah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁵Next, to Jeshaiiah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁶Next, to Mattaniah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁷Next, to Shimei and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁸Next, to Azarel and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

¹⁹Next, to Hashabiah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁰Next, to Shubael and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²¹Next, to Mattithiah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²²Next, to Jerimoth and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²³Next, to Hananiah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁴Next, to Joshbekashah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁵Next, to Hanani and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁶Next, to Mallothi and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁷Next, to Eliathah and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁸Next, to Hothir and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

²⁹Next, to Giddalti and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

³⁰Next, to Mahazioth and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

³¹Next, to Romamti-Eze and his sons and relatives, 12 in all.

Chapter 26

¹This is a list of the groups of men who guarded the temple gates:

From Korah's descendants, there was Meshelemiah son of Kore, who was one of Asaph's descendants.

²Meshelemiah had seven sons. His oldest son was Zechariah. His other sons were Jedaiel, Zebadiah, Jathniel, ³Elam, Jehohanan, and Eliehoenai.

⁴Another guard was Obed Edom. He had eight sons.

His oldest son was Shemaiah. His other sons were Jehozabad, Joah, Sakar, Nethanel, ⁵Ammiel, Issachar, and Peullethai. Obed Edom had many sons because God had blessed him.

⁶Obed Edom's son Shemaiah also had sons. They were leaders in their father's family because they were capable warriors.

⁷The sons of Shemaiah were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad. Shemaiah's relatives Elihu and Semakiah were also capable men.

⁸All of those descendants of Obed Edom and their sons and relatives were capable people and strong workers. Altogether there were 62 of them.

⁹Another guard was Meshelemiah. He and his sons and relatives were also capable people. There were 18 of them altogether.

¹⁰Another guard was Hosah, a descendant of Merari. Hosah had four sons. Hosah's son Shimri was the leader of that family because Hosah appointed him to be the leader, even though Shimri was not Hosah's oldest son.

¹¹Hosah's other sons were Hilkiah, Tabaliah, and Zechariah. Altogether there were 13 sons and relatives of Hosah.

¹²Those men were leaders of the groups of men who guarded the gates of the temple. They worked at the temple like their relatives did. ¹³By casting lots, the leader of each family chose one gate for their group to guard. All of them, including young men and old men, cast lots. ¹⁴The lot for Shelemiah's group indicated they would guard the east gate. The group of Shelemiah's son Zechariah, who was a wise counselor, cast lots. Those lots indicated Zechariah's group would guard the north gate.

¹⁵The lot for Obed Edom's group indicated they would guard the south gate, and the lot for Obed Edom's sons indicated they would guard the entrances to the temple storerooms.

¹⁶The lots for Shuppim's group and Hosah's group indicated they would guard the west gate and the Shalleketh Gate on the upper road to the temple.

The work for the guards corresponded to what was necessary for each duty. ¹⁷Each day there were six descendants of Levi who guarded the east gate, four who guarded the north gate, four who guarded the south gate, and two at a time who guarded the entrances to the storerooms. ¹⁸At the west gate there were two men who guarded the courtyard and four who guarded the road outside the courtyard.

¹⁹Those were the groups of men who were descendants of Korah and Merari who guarded the gates of the temple.

²⁰A man from the descendants of Levi, Ahijah, oversaw the places where the temple's treasures were as well as the places where the Levites kept the gifts that the people brought to the temple. ²¹The descendants of Ladan were themselves descendants of Gershon. They were leaders among their family groups. A descendant of this Ladan from the descendants of Gershon was Jehiel. ²²From the sons of Jehiel, Zetham and his younger brother Joel were in charge of the places where the temple's treasures were.

²³Others who did that work were descendants of Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.

²⁴Shubael, a descendant of Moses' son Gershom, was another leader in charge of where the treasures were.

²⁵Others who did that work were the descendants of Gershom's younger brother Eliezer. Those men were Eliezer's son Rehabiah, Rehabiah's son Jeshaiiah, Jeshaiiah's son Joram, Joram's son Zichri, and Zichri's son Shelomith.

²⁶Shelomith and his relatives were in charge of all the valuable things that certain people had dedicated to Yahweh. These people who dedicated things included King David, the leaders of the family groups, the army commanders

of 1,000 soldiers and commanders of 100 soldiers, as well as other army commanders. ²⁷They dedicated for the repair of Yahweh's temple some of the valuable things that those army officers had taken from Israel's enemies after Israel's army had defeated enemies in battles. ²⁸Shelomith and his relatives were also in charge of everything that the prophet Samuel, King Saul, and David's two army commanders Abner and Joab had dedicated to Yahweh.

²⁹From the descendants of Izhar, Kenaniah and his sons worked outside the temple area. They were officials and judges in various places in Israel.

³⁰From the descendants of Hebron, Hashabiah and his relatives were responsible for all the work done for Yahweh and for the king in the area west of the Jordan river. There were 1,700 of them who were able to do their work well.

³¹Scribes recorded in the records of Hebron's descendants that Jeriah was the leader of that family group. When David had been ruling for almost forty years, they searched in those records and found names of capable men descended from Hebron who were at the city of Jazer in the region of Gilead. ³²Jeriah had 2,700 relatives who were able to do their work well and who were leaders of their families. King David put them in charge of governing the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh, to ensure that all the people did what God commanded and what the king told them to do.

Chapter 27

¹This is a list of the Israelite men who served the king in the army. Some were leaders of families, some were commanders of 1,000 men, some were commanders of 100 men, and some were other officers. There were 24,000 men in each group. Each group served one month of each year.

²Jashobeam, son of Zabdiel, was in charge of the group that served during the first month of each year. ³He was a descendant of Perez, and he was the commander of all the army officers during the first month of each year.

⁴Dodai, from the clan of Ahohi, was the commander of the group that served during the second month of each year. Mikloth was an important leader in that group also.

⁵Benaiah, son of Jehoiada the high priest, was the commander of the group that served during the third month of each year. ⁶Benaiah was a mighty warrior among David's 30 greatest soldiers, and he was their leader. His son Ammizabad was his assistant.

⁷Asahel, Joab's younger brother, was the commander of the group that served during the fourth month of each year. Asahel's son Zebadiah became the commander after Asahel was killed.

⁸Shamhuth, a descendant of Izrah, was the commander for the fifth month.

⁹The commander for the sixth month was Ira son of Ikkesh from the city of Tekoa.

¹⁰The commander for the seventh month was Helez, a member of the clan of Pelon from the tribe of Ephraim.

¹¹The commander for the eighth month was Sibbekai, a descendant of Zerah from the city of Hushah.

¹²The commander for the ninth month was Abiezer from the city of Anathoth in the region belonging to the tribe of Benjamin.

¹³The commander for the tenth month was Maharai, a descendant of Zerah from the city of Netophath.

¹⁴The commander for the 11th month was Benaiah, a descendant of Ephraim from the city of Pirathon.

¹⁵The commander for the 12th month was Heldai, a descendant of Othniel from the city of Netophath.

¹⁶There were certain tribal leaders over each of the tribes of Israel:

Eliezer, son of Zicri, was the leader of the tribe of Reuben.

Shephatiah, son of Maacah, was the leader of the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁷Hashabiah, son of Kemuel, was the leader of the tribe of Levi.

Within the tribe of Levi, Zadok was the leader of Aaron's descendants.

¹⁸Elihu, David's older brother, was the leader of the tribe of Judah.

Omri, son of Michael, was the leader of the tribe of Issachar.

¹⁹Ishmaiah, son of Obadiah, was the leader of the tribe of Zebulun.

Jerimoth, son of Azriel, was the leader of the tribe of Naphtali.

²⁰Hoshea, son of Azaziah, was the leader of the tribe of Ephraim.

Joel, son of Pedaiah, was the leader of the western half of the tribe of Manasseh.

²¹Iddo, son of Zechariah, was the leader of the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh, in the region of Gilead.

Jaasiel, son of Abner, was the leader of the tribe of Benjamin.

²²Azarel, son of Jeroham, was the leader of the tribe of Dan. These men were the tribal leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel.

²³David did not tell Joab to count the men who were less than twenty years old, because Yahweh had promised many years previously that there would be as many people in Israel as there are stars in the sky. ²⁴Joab and his helpers started to count the men of Israel, but they did not finish counting them because Joab knew that Yahweh was angry about the census. Yahweh punished the people of Israel because of this counting, and as a result the officials did not write the total number of Israelite men able to serve in the army on the scroll about King David's rule.

²⁵Azmaveth, son of Adiel, was in charge of the king's storehouses. son of Uziah, was in charge of the agriculture storehouses in other towns and villages in Israel, as well as the watchtowers.

²⁶Ezri son of Kelub was in charge of the workers who farmed the land that belonged to the king.

²⁷Shimei from the city of Ramath was in charge of the king's vineyards. from the city of Shepham was in charge of storing the wine from the grapes produced in the vineyards.

²⁸Baal-Hanan from the city of Geder was in charge of the groves of olive and sycamore trees in the western foothills. Joash was in charge of storing the olive oil.

²⁹Shitrai from the Plain of Sharon was in charge of the herds of cattle that grazed there. son of Adlai was in charge of the cattle in the valleys.

³⁰Obil, a descendant of Ishmael, was in charge of the camels. from the city of Meronoth was in charge of the donkeys.

³¹Jaziz, a descendant of Hagar, was in charge of the king's flocks of sheep.

All of those officials were in charge of the things that belonged to King David.

³²David's uncle Jonathan was a wise counselor for him and an official secretary. son of Hacmoni, taught the king's sons.

³³Ahithophel was the king's official counselor. from the Ark people group was the king's friend.

³⁴Benaiah's son Jehoiada became the king's advisor after Ahithophel died, and later Abiathar became his advisor. was the chief commander of the army.

Chapter 28

¹David summoned all the leaders of Israel to come to Jerusalem. He summoned the leaders of the tribes, the leaders of the groups that worked for the king, the commanders of 1,000 soldiers, the commanders of 100 soldiers, those who were in charge of all the king's property and his livestock, those who taught his sons, all the palace officials, and his mighty soldiers and bravest warriors.

²King David stood up and said, "My fellow Israelites, listen to me. I wanted to build a temple to be a place where we would put the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel, where the sacred chest would act as the place of God's presence. And I made plans to build the temple. ³But God said to me, 'You are not the one to arrange the building of a temple to honor me, because you have fought battles and have killed people.'

⁴But Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, had chosen me and my descendants from all my relatives to be the kings of Israel forever. First he chose Judah to be a leader, and then from among the people of Judah and from my relatives, from among all my brothers, he chose me to be the king over all of Israel. ⁵Yahweh has given me many sons, but from them all he chose my son Solomon to be the next king to rule his kingdom of Israel. ⁶He said to me, 'Solomon your son is the one who will arrange to build my temple and the courtyards around it, because I have chosen him to be like my son and I will be like his father. ⁷I will enable his kingdom to endure forever if he continues to obey my laws and decrees, like he is doing now.'

⁸So now, while all you people of Israel, all of you who belong to Yahweh, are watching, and while God is listening, I command all you people to carefully obey all the commands of Yahweh our God, in order that you may continue to possess this good land and enable your descendants to inherit it forever.

⁹And you, my son Solomon, must know God like I know him, and you must serve him faithfully and because you want to. You must do that because he knows what everyone is thinking and he understands the reasons that people do what they do. If you seek to know him, he will heed your prayers. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you forever. ¹⁰Recognize that Yahweh has chosen you to arrange the building of a temple for him. Be strong and do what he wants you to do."

¹¹Then David gave to his son Solomon the scroll which contained the plans for the buildings of the temple, its porch, its storerooms, all the other upper rooms, the holy place, and the very holy place which will contain the sacred chest and its lid. ¹²The scroll also contained the plans that he had for building the courtyards for Yahweh's temple and all the surrounding rooms, including the rooms for the temple's money and the rooms for valuable things that people dedicated to God. ¹³David gave Solomon instructions for the work groups of priests and other descendants of Levi, about all the work that they must do to serve in Yahweh's temple, and about taking care of all the things they would use in the work at the temple. ¹⁴He had written down how much gold and how much silver to use to make all the items in the regular functions of the temple. The measurements of the amount of gold and silver were by weight. ¹⁵There was a list of how much gold to use for making the gold lampstands and the lamps, how much silver to use to make the silver lampstands and lamps, ¹⁶how much gold to use for making the table on which the priests would put the bread to display before God, how much silver to make the silver tables, ¹⁷how much pure gold for the meat forks and the bowls and the cups, how much gold for each gold dish, how much silver for each silver dish, ¹⁸how much refined gold to use to make the altar for burning incense, and how to make the golden statues of winged creatures that would be above the sacred chest symbolizing the agreement between Yahweh and the people of Israel, like a chariot for him.

¹⁹Then David said, "I have written all these plans with Yahweh's direction. He has enabled me to understand all the details of his plan for the temple's construction."

²⁰David also said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and courageous, and do this work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, because Yahweh our God, whom I worship, will be with you. He will not fail to help you or abandon you until you finish all the work of making his temple. ²¹Look, the groups of priests and other descendants of Levi are ready to begin their work at God’s temple, and every man who has a special skill will help you in all the work. And my officials and the other people will obey you, whatever you command them to do.”

Chapter 29

¹Then King David said to all the people who had gathered there, “My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen to be the next king, is young and does not have much experience. This endeavor of building the temple is large and significant, because this glorious building will not be to honor people, but to honor Yahweh our God. ²From all the things that I possess, I have provided the resources to build the temple of my God—gold for the things made of gold, silver for the things made of silver, bronze for the things made of bronze, iron for the things made of iron, wood for the things made of wood, and large amounts of onyx for inlays and turquoise and other valuable stones of various colors, and marble. ³In addition to all these things that I have given for the holy temple, I am giving my own treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, because I very earnestly desire the construction of this temple for my God. ⁴I am giving about 100 metric tons of gold from Ophir and 230 metric tons of refined silver to cover the walls of the buildings, ⁵for making the other items of gold and silver, and for the other work the craftsmen will do. So now, I ask you, who is willing to show by contributing other gifts for the building of the temple that he has dedicated himself to Yahweh?”

⁶Then the leaders of the families, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of 1,000 soldiers and the commanders of 100 soldiers, and the officials who supervised the work that the king wanted done, gave gifts willingly. ⁷For the work at the temple they gave 165 metric tons and eighty-four kilograms of gold, 330 metric tons of silver, 600 metric tons of bronze, and 3,300 metric tons of iron. ⁸Any people who owned valuable stones donated them to Yahweh’s temple. Officials stored the stones in the storeroom of the temple. Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon, was in charge of the stones. ⁹The people were happy to see that their leaders wanted to give those things; they were happy and enthusiastic to give those things to Yahweh. And King David also was very happy.

¹⁰Then, in front of all the people there, David praised Yahweh. He said,

“We praise you, Yahweh,

the God whom our ancestor Jacob worshiped.

We will praise you forever!

¹¹You, Yahweh, are great and powerful;

you are glorious, majestic and wonderful.

All of this is true because everything in heaven and on the earth is yours.

You are the king of all the world

and the exalted ruler of everything.

¹²Wealth and honor come from you;

you reign over all things.

Because you are very powerful,

you are able to cause anyone to be great and be strong.

¹³So now, our God, we thank you,

and we praise you for being majestic.

¹⁴But I and my people are not really able to give anything to you, because everything that we have comes from you; the things that we have given to you are only the things that we have received from you.

¹⁵You know that we are like foreigners and strangers to you, as our ancestors were. Our years here on earth are like a shadow that disappears quickly; we know that there is nothing that can enable us to escape dying.

¹⁶Yahweh our God, we have gathered all these things to use in building your temple to glorify your reputation as holy, but all of it really belongs to you, and you have given it to us. We give it all back to you.

¹⁷My God, I know that you test us people, and you are pleased when we do what is right.

All these things I have given to you because I wanted to.

And now I am pleased to see that your people have gathered in this place and generously given things to you.

¹⁸Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped, help your people continue to desire to do things like this forever, and help them be loyal to you.

¹⁹Please enable my son Solomon to faithfully and sincerely obey all of your laws and do everything that is needed to build this temple for which I have provided all these things."

²⁰Then David said to all the people who were gathered there, "Praise Yahweh our God!" So they all praised Yahweh the God whom their ancestors also worshiped. They prostrated themselves on the ground in front of Yahweh and in front of the king.

²¹The next day the people offered sacrifices to Yahweh. They presented many animals that they completely burned on the altar: 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams, 1,000 young sheep, offerings of wine, and many other sacrifices for all the people of Israel to eat. ²²On that day the people were joyful and ate and drank in Yahweh's honor.

Then for the second time they declared that Solomon, David's son, was now the king. They anointed him with olive oil to be the king on behalf of Yahweh, and they anointed Zadok to be the high priest. ²³So Solomon sat on the throne which represented Yahweh's reign over Israel. Solomon became king in the place of his father David. During the following years Solomon prospered, and all the Israelite people obeyed him. ²⁴All the officers and mighty warriors, as well as King David's other sons accepted Solomon as their king and promised to obey him.

²⁵Yahweh caused all the Israelite people to highly respect Solomon. Yahweh gave him a splendorous kingdom. No king of Israel who served Yahweh received such a kingdom like Solomon did.

²⁶Jesse's son David was the king who ruled all of Israel. ²⁷He ruled over Israel for 40 years: seven years in the city of Hebron and 33 years in Jerusalem. ²⁸He was very rich and very much honored, and he became an old man. Then he died, and his son Solomon became the king in David's place.

²⁹Take note, a record of all the things that King David did while he ruled, from the beginning to the end, the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad wrote on scrolls. ³⁰They told about his powerful rule, and all the things that happened to him and to the people of Israel and in the kingdoms of other countries while he was ruling Israel.

2 Chronicles

Chapter 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the two large pillars

the two bowl shaped tops on top of the pillars

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the golden altar,

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

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

²¹the pure gold decorations that resembled flowers,

and the lamps and tongs.

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

the gold doors of the temple,

the gold inner doors leading to the very holy place,

the gold doors leading to the main hall.

Chapter 5

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

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

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

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

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

"Yahweh is good to us;

he faithfully loves us forever."

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

Chapter 6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the chest that shows that you are powerful.

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

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

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

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

Chapter 7

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

'Yahweh is always good to us;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 8

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You people of Israel, let us go home!

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

So the Israelite leaders returned to their homes.

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

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

Chapter 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 14

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 15

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some suggested one thing, and others suggested something else.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 19

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

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

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

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

Chapter 20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Thank Yahweh,

because he faithfully loves us forever."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 21

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 22

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰Jehoiada took with him the army commanders, the important men, the leaders and many others, and brought the king down from the temple. They went into the palace through the Upper Gate, and put the king on his throne.

²¹Then all the people of Judah rejoiced. And there was quiet throughout the city, because Athaliah had been killed.

Chapter 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 25

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 26

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 27

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

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

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

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

⁷A record of everything else that Jotham did during the time that he was the king, including the wars that his army fought, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ⁸After he had ruled Judah for sixteen years, he died when he was forty-one years old. ⁹He was buried in Jerusalem, and his son Ahaz became the next king of Judah.

Chapter 28

¹Ahaz was twenty years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. His ancestor King David had been a good king, but Ahaz was not like David. He constantly disobeyed Yahweh ²and was as sinful as the kings of Israel had been. He made idols of the god Baal by having craftsmen cast them in metal. ³He burned incense in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He even killed some of his own sons in fires as sacrifices. That imitated the disgusting customs that the people groups who previously lived there had done, people whom Yahweh had drive out when the Israelites were advancing through the land. ⁴He offered sacrifices to idols at the houses built upon hilltops and under every big green tree.

⁵Therefore Yahweh his God allowed his army to be defeated by the army of the king of Aram. They captured many soldiers of Judah and took them as prisoners to Damascus. The army of the king of Israel also defeated the army of Judah and killed very many of their soldiers. ⁶In one day the army of Remaliah's son, King Pekah of Israel, killed 120,000 fine soldiers in Judah. That happened because the people of Judah had abandoned Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ⁷Zicri, a warrior from the tribe of Ephraim, killed King Ahaz's son Maaseiah, Azrikam, who was in charge of the palace, and Elkanah, the king's assistant. ⁸The soldiers of Israel captured 200,000 of the people of Judah, including many wives and sons and daughters of the soldiers of Judah. They also seized and took back to Samaria many valuable things.

⁹But a prophet of Yahweh, whose name was Oded, was in Samaria. He went out of the city to meet the army as it was returning. He said to them, "Yahweh, the God to whom your ancestors belonged, was angry with the people of Judah, so he has handed them over to you, and you have slaughtered so many in a towering rage. ¹⁰And now you want to sin by causing men and women from Judah to become your slaves, but you have certainly offended Yahweh, our God, in this matter. ¹¹So listen to me! Send back to Judah your fellow countrymen whom you have captured, because Yahweh is extremely angry with you for what you did to them."

¹²Then some of the leaders of the tribe of Ephraim—Azariah son of Johanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—rebuked those who were returning from the battle. ¹³They said to them, "You must not bring those prisoners here! If you do that, Yahweh will consider that we are guilty of sinning. We are already guilty of committing many sins; do you want to cause us to be even more guilty by committing another sin? God is already very angry with us people of Israel!"

¹⁴So, while their leaders and others were watching, the soldiers released the prisoners, and also gave back to them the valuable things that they had captured. ¹⁵The leaders assigned some men to take care of the prisoners. These men took some of the clothes that the soldiers had taken from the people of Judah and gave those clothes to the people who were naked. They also gave to the prisoners sandals and other clothes, as well as things to eat and drink, and they gave them olive oil to rub on their wounds. They gave donkeys to those who were very weak, in order that they could ride on them. Then they led them all to Jericho, the city that had many palm trees. Finally those men returned to Samaria.

¹⁶About that time, King Ahaz sent a message to the king of Assyria requesting help. ¹⁷He did that because the army from the Edom people group had come again and attacked Judah and taken away many of the people of Judah as prisoners. ¹⁸At the same time, men from Philistia raided towns in the foothills and in the southern Judean wilderness. They captured the cities of Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, and Gederoth, as well as those of Soko, Timnah, and Gimzo with its nearby villages. ¹⁹Yahweh allowed those things to happen in order to humble King Ahaz, because he had encouraged the people of Judah to do wicked things and had disobeyed Yahweh very much. ²⁰Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, sent his army saying that they would help Ahaz, but instead of helping him, they caused him trouble. ²¹Ahaz's soldiers took some of the valuable things from the temple and from the king's palace and from other leaders of Judah, and sent them to the king of Assyria to pay him to help them, but the king of Assyria refused to help Ahaz.

²²While King Ahaz was experiencing those troubles, he disobeyed Yahweh even more. ²³He offered sacrifices to the gods that were worshiped in Damascus, whose army had defeated his army. He thought, "The gods that are worshiped by the kings of Aram have helped them, so I will offer sacrifices to those gods in order that they will help me." But worshiping those gods caused Ahaz and all of Israel to be ruined.

²⁴Ahaz gathered all the furnishings that were used in the temple and broke them into pieces. He locked the doors of the temple and set up altars for worshiping idols at every street corner in Jerusalem. ²⁵In every city in Judah, his workers built houses on the hilltops, and there they burned sacrifices to other gods, and that caused Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, to be very angry with them.

²⁶A record of the other things that Ahaz did while he was the king, from when he started to rule until he died, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷Ahaz died and was buried in Jerusalem, but he was not buried in the tombs where the other kings of Israel had been buried. Then his son Hezekiah became the king.

Chapter 29

¹Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of a man whose name was Zechariah. ²Hezekiah did things that Yahweh considered to be right, like his ancestor King David had done.

³During the first month of the first year that Hezekiah was ruling Judah, he unlocked the doors of the temple, and his workers repaired them. ⁴Then he gathered the priests and other descendants of Levi in the courtyard on the east side of the temple, ⁵and he said to them, "You descendants of Levi, listen to me! Set yourselves apart, and prepare the house of Yahweh so it is a place that honors Yahweh, whom your ancestors worshiped; carry out all the filthiness that is in the holy place. ⁶Our ancestors disobeyed God; they did many things that he says are evil, and they did things that are not pleasing to him. They abandoned this place where Yahweh lives, and they have stopped worshiping him. ⁷They locked the doors of the temple and extinguished the lamps. They did not burn any incense, and they did not offer any sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar in the holy place.

⁸Therefore, Yahweh has become very angry with us people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, and he has caused other people to become frightened and horrified of us. And they ridicule us. You know this very well. ⁹That is why our fathers have been killed in battles, and our sons and daughters and our wives have been captured and taken to other countries. ¹⁰But now I intend to make a covenant with Yahweh, our God, in order that he will no

longer be angry with us. ¹¹You who are like my sons, do not waste any time. Do immediately what Yahweh wants you to do. Yahweh has chosen you to stand in his presence and offer sacrifices and burn incense."

¹²Then these descendants of Levi started to work in the temple.

From the descendants of Kohath there were Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah.

From the descendants of Merari there were Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehallelel.

From the descendants of Gershon there were Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah.

¹³From the descendants of Elizaphan there were Shimri and Jeiel.

From the descendants of Asaph there were Zechariah and Mattaniah.

¹⁴From the descendants of Heman there were Jehiel and Shimei.

From the descendants of Jeduthun there were Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵Those men gathered their fellow descendants of Levi and together they prepared themselves for the work of the priesthood. They took all the steps to prepare themselves so they could serve the king in Yahweh's house, because the king was following Yahweh's commands. And the Levites entered the temple to clean it up. ¹⁶They worked within the temple to purify it. They brought out into the courtyard of the temple everything that they had found in the temple that was not pleasing to Yahweh. Then the descendants of Levi took those things down to the Kidron Valley and burned them there. ¹⁷The priests and other descendants of Levi started this work on the first day of the first month and finished setting apart for the honor of Yahweh, the courtyard of the temple on the eighth day of that month, and they finished the work of setting the temple apart for the honor of Yahweh, one week later.

¹⁸Then they went to King Hezekiah and reported this: "We have purified all parts of the temple, and the altar where sacrifices are completely burned, and all the items used at the altar, the table on which the priests display the bread before Yahweh, and the things used at that table. ¹⁹Ahaz ruled over us, he disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded, and he threw away many of the tools and implements from the temple many things that should be there, but now we have brought them back, we dedicated them to Yahweh's service, and then we placed them in front of the altar of Yahweh, where they can be seen."

²⁰Early the next morning, King Hezekiah gathered together the city officials, and they went to the courtyard of the temple. ²¹They took with them seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs, and seven male goats to be an offering in order that Yahweh would forgive the sins of all the people in the kingdom of Judah, and in order to purify the temple. The king commanded that the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, should offer those animals to be sacrifices to Yahweh on the altar. ²²So first the priests slaughtered those bulls, and took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Then they slaughtered the rams and sprinkled their blood on the altar. Then they slaughtered the lambs and sprinkled their blood on the altar. ²³The goats that were slaughtered to be an offering in order that Yahweh would forgive the sins of the people were brought to the king and the others who were there. Then the king and those who were present laid their hands on those goats. ²⁴Then the priests slaughtered those goats and splashed their blood on the altar, to atone for the sins of Israel. The priests did that because the king had commanded that offerings that would be completely burned on the altar and other sacrifices should be made for all the people of Israel.

²⁵The king then told the descendants of Levi to stand in the temple with their cymbals, harps, and lyres, obeying what David and his prophets Gad and Nathan had commanded. Those were things that Yahweh had told his prophets that the descendants of Levi should do. ²⁶So the descendants of Levi went and stood in the temple, and began to play the musical instruments that King David had given to them. And the priests began to blow their trumpets.

²⁷Then Hezekiah told some of the priests to slaughter the animals that would be completely burned on the altar. When they started to slaughter the animals, the people started to sing to praise Yahweh, while the other

descendants of Levi were playing their instruments. ²⁸All the people who were there bowed to worship Yahweh, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. They continued to do this until they had finished slaughtering all the animals that would be completely burned.

²⁹When they finished making those offerings, the king and all those who were there knelt down and worshiped Yahweh. ³⁰Then King Hezekiah and his officials commanded the descendants of Levi to praise Yahweh, singing the songs composed by David and Asaph the prophet. So they sang songs joyfully, and bowed their heads to worship.

³¹Then Hezekiah said, "You have now set yourselves apart for the honor of Yahweh. So come close to the temple and bring animals to be sacrificed, and also bring the other offerings to thank Yahweh for what he has done for you." Then those who wanted to bring animals to be completely burned on the altar brought them.

³²Altogether they brought seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred male lambs to be completely burned on the altar. ³³The other animals that they brought were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep and goats that were set apart for the honor of Yahweh, to be sacrifices. ³⁴There were not enough priests to remove the skins from the animals that would be completely burned on the altar. So the descendants of Levi stepped in to help the priests until the work was finished. The Levites were more hard-working and dedicated than the priests were.

³⁵In addition to all the offerings that were completely burned on the altar, the priests burned the fat of the accompanying animals that were sacrificed to maintain good fellowship with Yahweh; there were also offerings of wine.

In this way the worship at the temple began again. ³⁶And Hezekiah and all the other people of Judah celebrated, because God had enabled them to do all the repair work very quickly.

Chapter 30

¹⁻³King Hezekiah, his officials, and all the other people who had gathered in Jerusalem wanted to celebrate the Passover festival. But they were not able to celebrate it at the usual time, because many of the priests had still not been able to perform all the rites of purity for themselves, so they were not allowed to do the work of that festival. Also, not everyone had come to Jerusalem to celebrate it. So they decided to celebrate the festival the following month. ⁴The king and all the other people who had gathered thought that this was a good plan. ⁵So they decided to send messages to all the cities and villages in Judah and in Israel, from Beersheba in the far south to Dan in the far north, including places in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, to invite people to come to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to honor Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped. Many of the people had not previously celebrated that festival, even though it had been written in the law of Moses that they should do that.

⁶Obedying what the king commanded, messengers went throughout Judah and Israel, taking messages that had been written by the king and his officials. This is what they wrote:

"You Israelite people, you who survived after being slaves of the kings of Assyria, return to Yahweh, the God whom our great ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped, in order that he may return to you. Your fathers and your fellow countrymen did not faithfully obey Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped.

⁷Do not act like they did, because what they did caused Yahweh to punish them so severely that other people were horrified when they heard of what he had done. ⁸Do not be stubborn as our ancestors were. Do what Yahweh desires. Come to Jerusalem to the temple, which he has set apart for his honor forever. Do what pleases Yahweh our God, in order that he will no longer be angry with you. ⁹If you return to Yahweh, the people who have captured our brothers and sisters and our children will act kindly toward them, and allow them to return to this land. Do not forget that Yahweh our God is kind and merciful. If you return to him, he will no longer reject you."

¹⁰The messengers went to all the cities in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far north as the tribe of Zebulun, and gave them this message, but most of the people there scorned them and ridiculed them. ¹¹But some of the people of the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun acknowledged their sin and went to Jerusalem. ¹²Also in Judah God made the people want together to obey Yahweh, which is what the king and his officials had told them to do in the message that they sent.

¹³So a huge crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem in the second month of the year, to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁴They removed the altars of Baal in Jerusalem and took away the altars for burning incense to honor other gods; they burned them all in the Kidron Valley.

¹⁵They slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of that month. The priests and the other descendants of Levi who had not performed the rituals to purify themselves, they were ashamed; and they set about to make themselves qualified for the service to Yahweh, and they brought to the temple animals to be completely burned on the altar in the house of Yahweh.

¹⁶Then they stood in the places that Moses had written in his law that they should stand in. Then the descendants of Levi gave to the priests bowls containing blood of the animals that were being sacrificed, and the priests sprinkled the altar with some of the blood. ¹⁷Many people in the crowd had not purified themselves, and therefore they were not able to kill the lambs and dedicate them to Yahweh. So it was necessary for the descendants of Levi to kill the lambs for them. ¹⁸Although most of the people who had come from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Issachar had not purified themselves, they ate the food of the Passover Festival anyway, ignoring the rules written by Moses. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying "Yahweh, you always do what is good; I pray that you will forgive everyone ¹⁹who sincerely wants to honor you, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, even if they have not purified themselves by obeying the sacred laws that you gave to us." ²⁰And Yahweh heard what Hezekiah prayed; he forgave the people, and did not punish them.

²¹The Israelite people who were there in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. They rejoiced greatly as they celebrated, while the priests and other descendants of Levi sang to Yahweh every day and played musical instruments to praise God.

²²Hezekiah thanked all the descendants of Levi for doing this work for Yahweh, and for very skillfully leading the people who were worshiping. For those seven days the people ate the Passover food and brought offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh and praised Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors had worshiped.

²³Then the whole group decided to celebrate for seven more days; so they celebrated joyfully for seven more days.

²⁴King Hezekiah provided one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep to be slaughtered for the people to eat during the festival, and the officials also gave them one thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. Many priests set themselves apart for serving Yahweh and to honor him, at this festival. ²⁵All the people of Judah rejoiced, including the priests and other descendants of Levi and all the people from Israel who had come, and including some from other countries who were living in Israel and some from other countries who were living in Judah. ²⁶Everyone in Jerusalem was very joyful, because nothing like this had happened in Jerusalem since the time when David's son Solomon was the king of Israel. ²⁷The priests and the other descendants of Levi stood up to bless the people, and God heard them, because their prayers reached up to heaven, the holy place where God lives.

Chapter 31

¹After the festival ended, the Israelites who were there went to all the cities in Judah and smashed the stones for worshiping idols, and cut down the poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah. They destroyed the high places where idols were worshiped, and the altars of Baal throughout the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and also in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. After destroying all of them, they returned to their own cities and towns.

²Hezekiah divided the priests and other descendants of Levi into groups. He appointed some of the groups to offer sacrifices that would be completely burned on the altar and offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. He

appointed some groups to do other work at the temple: Some to lead the people in their worship, some to thank Yahweh, and some to sing songs to praise Yahweh at the gates of the temple. ³The king contributed some of his own funds to buy animals that would be sacrificed in the morning and in the evening of each day, and on the Sabbath days, to celebrate the new moons, and during the other feasts, according to what was written in the laws that Yahweh gave to Moses. ⁴Hezekiah told the people living in Jerusalem to give to the priests and the other descendants of Levi the portions of meat that should be given to them, in order that they could devote all their time to obeying the laws of Yahweh. ⁵As soon as he told that to them, they generously gave the first part of their harvest of grain, and the first part of the new wine that they produced, and olive oil and honey, and of the crops that grew in their fields. They brought to the temple a tenth of all their crops. ⁶The men of Israel and Judah who were living in various cities in Judah also brought a tenth of their cattle and sheep and goats, and a tenth of other things that they had set them apart for the honor of Yahweh their God, and they piled up all those things in heaps. ⁷They started to do that in the third month and finished doing it in the seventh month. ⁸When Hezekiah and his officials saw the heaps, they praised Yahweh and requested God to bless the people.

⁹But Hezekiah asked the priests and other descendants of Levi, "What are these heaps of things?" ¹⁰Then Azariah the high priest, a descendant of Zadok, replied, "Since the time that the people started to bring their offerings to the temple, we have had even more food than we need. This has happened because Yahweh has greatly blessed our fellow Israelites, with the result that all this is left over after we priests and other descendants of Levi took all that we need!"

¹¹Then Hezekiah ordered that they should prepare storerooms at the temple to hold these supplies. ¹²Then they brought into the storerooms all the tithes and offerings and things and the things dedicated to Yahweh which the people had brought. One of the descendants of Levi whose name was Konaniah was in charge of those things, and his younger brother Shimei was his assistant. ¹³Those two men supervised Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath and Benaiah while they did the work. They were appointed by King Hezekiah; Azariah was in charge of everything that was done in the temple.

¹⁴Kore son of Imnah, another descendant of Levi, who guarded the east gate of the temple, was in charge of the offerings to God that were made voluntarily. He distributed to the priests and other descendants of Levi the offerings and other things that were dedicated to Yahweh. ¹⁵Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah faithfully assisted him in the towns where the priests lived. They distributed those things to the groups of their fellow priests; they distributed them to everyone, including those who were young and those who were old.

¹⁶They also distributed things to the males who were at least three years old, those whose names were on the scrolls where lists of family names were written. They were males who were allowed to enter the temple to perform their tasks each day, the tasks that each group had been assigned to do. ¹⁷The names of the priests were on the scrolls where their families' names were written. They also distributed things to groups of descendants of Levi, those who were at least twenty years old. ¹⁸They included all their little children and wives and other sons and daughters whose names were on the scrolls where the family names were written, because they also faithfully had set themselves apart for the honor of Yahweh and his requirements for holiness.

¹⁹Hezekiah also appointed other men to distribute portions of those offerings to the priests and other descendants of Levi who were living in the pasturelands around the towns of Judah. But they gave things only to those who were descendants of Aaron the first high priest, whose names were on the scrolls containing the names of their families.

²⁰That is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah. He always faithfully did things that Yahweh his God says are right and good. ²¹In everything that he did for the worship in the temple, and as he obeyed God's laws and commands, he tried to find out what his God wanted, and he worked energetically. So he was successful.

Chapter 32

¹After King Hezekiah had obeyed Yahweh's instructions and had done all those things, King Sennacherib of Assyria came with his army and invaded Judah. He commanded his soldiers to surround the cities that had walls around

them, thinking that they would break through those walls and conquer those cities. ²When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come with his army and that they intended to attack Jerusalem, ³⁻⁴he consulted with his officials and army leaders. They said to themselves, "Why should we allow the king of Assyria and his army to come and find plenty of water to drink?" So they decided to stop the water from flowing outside the city. A large group of men gathered together and blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through that area. ⁵Then they worked hard to repair all the sections of the city wall that had been broken, and they built watchtowers on the walls higher. They strengthened the Millo, a massive supporting wall on the east side of the city of David. They also made a large number of weapons and shields.

⁶Hezekiah appointed army commanders, and he gathered them in front of him in the square at one of the city gates, and he encouraged them by saying this to them: ⁷"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the huge army that is with him, because Yahweh is with us, and his power is greater than their power. ⁸They have to rely on the power of humans, but we have Yahweh our God to help us and to fight battles for us." So the people became more confident because of what Hezekiah, the king of Judah, said.

⁹Later, when Sennacherib and all his soldiers were surrounding the city of Lachish, he sent some officers to Jerusalem to give this message to King Hezekiah and to all the people of Judah who were there:

¹⁰"I am Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, and this is what I say: While you are staying in Jerusalem, my soldiers are surrounding the city. So what are you depending on to keep you safe? ¹¹Hezekiah says to you, 'Yahweh our God will save us from being defeated by the army of you.' He wants you to die from having no food or water. ¹²Hezekiah is the one who told his men to get rid of that god's high places on the hills, and his altars in the countryside, saying to you people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, 'You must worship at only one altar and burn sacrifices on only that altar.'

¹³⁻¹⁴Do you people not know what I and my ancestors have done to all the people groups in other countries? We destroyed them all, and their gods could not save them from me. ¹⁵So do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you like this. Do not believe what he says, because no god of any nation or kingdom has ever been able to rescue his people from being conquered by my army and the armies of my ancestors. So certainly your god will not be able to rescue you from my power."

¹⁶Sennacherib's officers said more things to insult Yahweh their God and Hezekiah, who served God well. ¹⁷King Sennacherib wrote more letters insulting Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites belonged to. He wrote, "No god of any of these nations I have conquered could save his people from me. Similarly, the god of Hezekiah will not save his people from my power." ¹⁸Then the officers shouted in the Hebrew language to the people who were on the wall, in order to cause them to be very terrified, thinking that as a result the army of Assyria could capture the city without a battle. ¹⁹They belittled the God worshiped by the people of Jerusalem like they belittled the gods of the other people groups of the world, gods which indeed were only idols fashioned by craftsmen.

²⁰Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out to God, praying very earnestly about this. ²¹And that night Yahweh sent an angel who killed all the soldiers of Assyria and their leaders and their officers in the place where the king of Assyria and his army had set up their tents. So the king of Assyria left, and returned to his own country, very disgraced. And one day when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons struck him with their swords and killed him.

²²That is how Yahweh guided and rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the power of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the power of all their other enemies. That is how he gave them peace with all the countries near them. ²³Many people brought offerings for Yahweh to Jerusalem, and also brought valuable gifts for King Hezekiah. And from that time, Hezekiah was highly respected by the people of all the other nations.

²⁴About that time, Hezekiah became very ill. He thought that he was about to die. But he prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him. He performed a miracle and healed Hezekiah. ²⁵But Hezekiah was very proud, and he did not thank Yahweh for acting kindly toward him. Therefore Yahweh was angry with him and punished him and the

people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah. ²⁶Then Hezekiah said that he was sorry about being proud, and the people of Jerusalem also said that they were sorry for their sins. So Yahweh did not punish them during the remaining years that Hezekiah was their king.

²⁷Hezekiah became very rich and was greatly honored. His workers made storerooms for his silver and gold, for his very valuable stones, and for spices and shields and other valuable things. ²⁸His workers also built buildings to store the grain and wine and olive oil that people produced and brought to him. They also made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for his flocks of sheep and goats. ²⁹They built cities and acquired for the king great many flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle, because God had enabled him to become very rich.

³⁰Hezekiah was the one who told his workers to block the place where the water flows out of the spring of Gihon, and to build a tunnel through which the water flowed to the west side of the area called the city of David. He was able to do everything that he wanted to do. ³¹But when messengers who were sent by the rulers of Babylon came and asked about the miracle that God had performed in the land, it was then that God left Hezekiah alone in order to test him. God tested him so that he would know everything that was in Hezekiah's heart.

³²A record of the other things that happened while Hezekiah was ruling, and the things that he did to please God, is written on the scroll of the vision of Isaiah the prophet. It is also written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ³³When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the tombs where the most respected kings of Judah were buried. Everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah honored him. Then his son Manasseh became the king.

Chapter 33

¹Manasseh was twelve years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for fifty-five years. ²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He imitated the disgusting things that were formerly done by the people groups that Yahweh had expelled from Israel as his people advanced into the land. ³He commanded his workers to rebuild the high places upon the hills for worshiping idols, the same ones that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He told them to set up poles to honor the god Baal, and to make poles to honor the goddess Asherah. He also bowed down to worship all the stars. ⁴He directed his workers to build altars for foreign gods in the temple itself, about which Yahweh had said, "It is here in Jerusalem that I want people to worship me, forever." ⁵He directed that altars for worshiping all the stars be built in both of the courtyards outside the temple. ⁶He even sacrificed some of his own sons by burning them in a fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He performed rituals to practice sorcery. He asked fortune tellers for advice. He performed witchcraft. He talked to people who consulted the spirits of people who had died to find out what would happen in the future. He did many things that Yahweh says are very evil, things that caused Yahweh to become very angry.

⁷Manasseh took the carved idol that his workers had made and put it in the temple. That is the temple concerning which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, "My temple will be here in Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen where I want people to worship me, forever." ⁸If they will obey all the laws and decrees and regulations that I told Moses to give to them, I will not again force the Israelite people to leave this land that I gave to their ancestors." ⁹But Manasseh led the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah to do things that are wrong, with the result that they did more evil than had been done by the people in the people groups that Yahweh had driven out as the Israelite people advanced through the land.

¹⁰Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and the people of Judah, but they paid no attention. ¹¹So Yahweh caused the army commanders of Assyria and their soldiers to come to Jerusalem, and they captured Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose, put bronze chains on his feet, and took him to Babylon. ¹²There, while he was suffering, he humbled himself greatly in the presence of Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors worshiped, and pleaded with Yahweh to help him. ¹³When he prayed, Yahweh heard him and pitied him. So he allowed him to return to Jerusalem and to rule his kingdom again. Then Manasseh realized that Yahweh is God, who can do anything.

¹⁴Later, Manasseh's workers rebuilt the eastern section of the outer wall around Jerusalem, and they made it higher. That section extended from spring of Gihon north to the Fish Gate, and around the part of the city that they

called Ophel Hill. Manasseh also appointed army officers to guard each of the cities in Judah that had walls around them. ¹⁵Manasseh's workers removed from the temple the idols and the figures of gods of other nations. He also told them to remove the altars that they had previously built on Mount Zion and in other places in Jerusalem. He had all those things thrown out of the city. ¹⁶Then he told them to repair the altar of Yahweh, and he offered sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh and to thank him. And he told the people of Judah that they must worship only Yahweh. ¹⁷The people continued to offer sacrifices at the high places on the hills, but only to Yahweh their God.

¹⁸The other things that happened while Manasseh was ruling, including his prayer to God and the messages from Yahweh that the prophets spoke to him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel. ¹⁹What Manasseh prayed and how God pitied him because of what he pleaded to God for—also his sins and ways in which he disobeyed God—also the list of places where he built the houses on the hills for idol worship and set up poles to honor the goddess Asherah and other idols before he humbled himself—these are all written in what the prophets wrote. ²⁰Manasseh died and was buried in his palace. Then his son Amon became the king of Judah.

²¹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for two years. ²²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped all the idols that Manasseh's workers had made. ²³But he did not humble himself and turn to Yahweh like his father did. So he became more sinful than his father had been.

²⁴Then Amon's officials made plans to kill him. They assassinated him in his palace. ²⁵But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated Amon, and they appointed his son Josiah to be their king.

Chapter 34

¹Josiah was eight years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for thirty-one years. ²He did things that were pleasing to Yahweh, and conducted his life like his ancestor King David had done. He fully obeyed all the laws of God.

³When he had been ruling for almost eight years, while he was still a boy, he began to worship God as his ancestor King David had done. Four years later, he began to get rid of all the houses that were built on the hills for idol worship, and they were all around Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. They also took down the poles that were to give honor the goddess Asherah and the carved idols and metal statues of gods. ⁴While he directed them, his workers tore down the altars where people worshiped Baal. They smashed the altars that were near those altars, where people burned incense. They smashed the poles to honor the goddess Asherah and the idols carved from wood or stone and metal statues. They smashed them to bits and scattered the bits over the graves of those who had offered sacrifices to them. ⁵They burned the bones of the priests who had offered sacrifices; they burned them on their own altars. In that way Josiah caused Jerusalem and other places in Judah to be acceptable places to worship Yahweh again. ⁶In the towns in the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far north as the tribe of Naphtali and in the ruins around all those towns, ⁷Josiah's workers tore down the pagan altars and the poles to honor the goddess Asherah, and crushed the idols to powder, idols that craftsmen had carved. They also smashed to pieces all the altars for burning incense throughout Israel. Then Josiah returned to Jerusalem.

⁸When Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he decided to do something else to cause the land and the temple to be acceptable places to worship Yahweh. So he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city and Joah son of Joahaz, the secretary, to repair the temple of Yahweh.

⁹They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought to the temple. That was the money that the descendants of Levi who guarded the doors of the temple had collected from the people of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim and other places in Israel, and also from all the people in Jerusalem and other places in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—all the people of the land who survived.

¹⁰Then Hilkiah gave some of the money to the men who had been appointed to supervise the work of repairing the temple. The supervisors paid the men who did the repair work. ¹¹They also gave some of the money to the carpenters and builders to buy the cut stones and the timber for the joists and the beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to decay.

¹²The workers did their work faithfully. Their supervisors were Jahath and Obadiah, who were descendants of Levi's son Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, who were descendants of Levi's son Kohath. All the descendants of Levi, who played musical instruments well, ¹³supervised all the workers as they did their various jobs. Some of the descendants of Levi were secretaries; some kept records, and some guarded the temple gates.

¹⁴While they were giving to the supervisors the money that had been taken to the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found a scroll on which was written the laws that Yahweh had given to Moses to give to the people. ¹⁵So Hilkiah said to Shaphan, "I have found in the temple a scroll on which is written the laws that God gave to Moses!" Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan.

¹⁶Shaphan took the scroll to the king and said to him, "Your officials are doing everything that you told them to do.

¹⁷They have taken the money that was in the temple, and they have given it to the men who will supervise the men who will repair the temple." ¹⁸Then Shaphan said to the king, "I have also brought to you a scroll that Hilkiah gave to me." And Shaphan started to read it to the king.

¹⁹When the king heard the laws that were written in the scroll, he tore his clothes because he was very upset.

²⁰Then he gave these instructions to Hilkiah, to Shaphan's son Ahikam, to Micah's son Abdon, to Shaphan, and to Asaiah, the king's special advisor: ²¹"Go and ask Yahweh for me, and for all his people who are still alive in Judah and Israel, about what is written in this scroll that has been found. Because it is clear that Yahweh is very angry with us because our ancestors disobeyed what Yahweh said; they did not obey the laws that are written on this scroll."

²²So Hilkiah and the others went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah, who was a prophetess who lived in the Second District of Jerusalem. Her husband Shallum son of Tikvah, took care of the robes that were worn in the temple.

²³When they told her what the king had said, she said to them, "This is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites say we worship, says: 'Go back and tell the king who sent you ²⁴that this is what Yahweh says: "Listen to this carefully. I am going to bring a disaster on Jerusalem and all the people who live here. I will send on them the curses that were written in the scroll that was read to the king of Judah. ²⁵I will do that because they have abandoned me, and they burn incense to honor other gods. They have caused me to become very angry because of all the idols that they have made.'" ²⁶The king of Judah sent you to inquire what I, Yahweh, want. Go and tell him that this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom you Israelites worship, say about what you read: ²⁷'Because you heeded what was written in the scroll, and you humbled yourself when you heard what I said to warn about what would happen to this city and the people who live here, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have listened to you. ²⁸So I will allow you to die in peace, without seeing me punish this place and the people living in it.'"

So they took her reply back to the king. ²⁹Then the king summoned all the elders of Jerusalem and other places in Judea. ³⁰They went up together to the temple with the leaders of Judah and many other people of Jerusalem and the priests and other descendants of Levi, from the least important to the most important ones. And while they listened, the king read to them everything that was in the scroll containing God's laws that had been found in the temple.

³¹Then the king stood next to the pillar at the entrance to the temple, where kings stood when they announced something important, and while Yahweh was listening, he repeated his promise to sincerely obey, with his entire inner being, Yahweh and all his commands and regulations and decrees that were written on the scroll.

³²Then the king said that everyone who lived in Jerusalem and from the tribe of Benjamin should promise that they also would obey those laws. And they did that, agreeing that they would obey the agreement that God, whom their ancestors had worshiped, had made with them.

³³Josiah instructed his workers to remove all the disgusting idols from all the land of the Israelite people, and he commanded that all those from Israel who were there should worship only Yahweh their God. As long as Josiah was alive, the people did what was pleasing to Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped.

Chapter 35

¹Josiah commanded that the people should celebrate the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. So they slaughtered the lambs for the Passover on the 14th day of the first month. ²Josiah assigned to the priests to the tasks that they should perform at the temple, and encouraged them do their work well. ³The descendants of Levi were the ones who taught all the Israelite people; they had been set apart for Yahweh. Josiah said to them, "Put the sacred chest in the temple that the workers of David's son King Solomon of Israel built. But carry it on poles; do not carry it on your shoulders. And do well your work for Yahweh your God and for his Israelite people. ⁴Divide yourselves into your traditional clans, obeying the instructions that King David and his son Solomon wrote.

⁵Then stand in the temple area, with each of you in your own Levite clan, ready to help your fellow Israelites when they bring their offerings to the temple. ⁶Slaughter the lambs for the Passover. Do this for your fellow Israelites. Perform the rituals to set yourselves apart for God's honor and to serve Yahweh and do his work. Prepare the sacrifices, doing what Yahweh told Moses to tell you that you should do."

⁷Josiah provided from his own flocks and herds thirty thousand young sheep and goats for the Passover sacrifices. He also provided three thousand bulls from his own herds.

⁸His officials also voluntarily contributed animals for the people and the priests and the other descendants of Levi. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the officials who were in charge of the temple, gave to the priests 2,600 lambs and three hundred cattle to be sacrifices for the Passover. ⁹Also, Konaniah, along with his younger brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad, the leaders of the descendants of Levi, provided five thousand lambs and five hundred cattle for the other descendants of Levi, to be sacrifices for the Passover.

¹⁰Everything for the Passover was arranged: The priests and the other descendants of Levi stood in their places in their groups, as the king had commanded. ¹¹Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs. The priests sprinkled the blood from the bowls that were handed to them, while the other descendants of Levi removed the skins from the animals. ¹²They set aside the animals to be completely burned on the altar, in order to give them to the various family groups to offer to Yahweh, obeying the instructions that were written in the laws God gave Moses. They did the same thing with the cattle. ¹³Obeying those regulations, they roasted over the fire the lambs for the Passover. And they boiled the meat of the sacred offerings in pots and kettles and pans, and served the meat immediately to all the people who were there. ¹⁴After that, they prepared meat for themselves and for the priests, because the priests were busy until nighttime, sacrificing the offerings to be completely burned and burning the fat parts of the offerings. So the descendants of Levi prepared meat for themselves and for the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, the first high priest.

¹⁵The musicians, who were descendants of Asaph, stood in their places, as had been commanded by King David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The men who guarded the gates of the temple did not need to leave their places, because their fellow descendants of Levi prepared food for them to eat.

¹⁶So on that day everything that needed to be done for worshiping Yahweh was done. They celebrated the Passover Festival, and they presented offerings to be completely burned on the altar, which was what Josiah had commanded. ¹⁷The Israelites who were there celebrated the Passover on that day, and for seven days they celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁸The Passover Festival had not been celebrated like that in Israel since the time that the prophet Samuel lived. And none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated the Passover like

Josiah did, along with the priests, the other descendants of Levi, and all the other people of Judah and Israel who were there with the people who lived in Jerusalem. ¹⁹They celebrated this Passover Festival when Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years.

²⁰After Josiah had done all those things to restore the worship at the temple, King Necho of Egypt went with his army to attack the city of Carchemish alongside the Euphrates River, and Josiah marched with his army to fight against them. ²¹Necho sent some messengers to Josiah, to tell him, "You are the king of Judah, and there is certainly no reason for you to fight me; we are attacking the army of Babylonia. God has told me to hurry. So stop opposing God, who is for me. If you do not stop, God will get rid of you."

²²But Josiah would not listen to him. Instead, he disguised himself in order to be able to attack the army of Egypt without anyone recognizing him. He did not pay any attention to what God had told Necho to say. Instead, he and his army went to fight Necho's army at the plain of Megiddo.

²³Some archers shot King Josiah. He told his officers, "Take me away from here because I am badly wounded." ²⁴So they took him out of his chariot and put him in another chariot that he had brought with him, and they took him to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried in the tombs where his ancestors had been buried, and all the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah mourned for him.

²⁵The prophet Jeremiah composed a song to lament for Josiah, and all the men and women singers in Israel still mourn for Josiah by singing that song. That became a custom in Israel; the words of that song are written in a scroll of funeral songs.

²⁶⁻²⁷A record of the other things that happened while Josiah ruled, from the time he started to rule until he died, including how he faithfully was devoted to honoring God by obeying all that was written in the laws of Yahweh, is written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Chapter 36

¹Then the people of Judah chose Josiah's son Jehoahaz and appointed him to be the king in Jerusalem.

²Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became the king, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. ³The king of Egypt captured him and prevented him from ruling any longer. He also forced the people of Judah to pay to him a tax of three and one-third metric tons of silver and thirty-three kilograms of gold. ⁴The king of Egypt appointed Jehoahaz's younger brother Eliakim to be the king of Judah. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But Necho seized Jehoahaz and took him to Egypt.

⁵Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ⁶Then the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Jehoiakim's army. They captured Jehoiakim, fastened him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon.

⁷Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers also took valuable things from the temple. They took them to Babylon and put them in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace there.

⁸A record of the other things that happened while Jehoiakim was ruling, the disgusting things that he did and the evil things that people said that he did, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. After he was taken to Babylon, his son Jehoiachin became the king of Judah.

⁹Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months and ten days. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ¹⁰During the spring of the next year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent soldiers to bring him to Babylon. They also took to Babylon many valuable things from the temple of Yahweh. Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be the king of Judah.

¹¹Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. ¹²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him a

message from Yahweh to warn him. ¹³He would not return to Yahweh, the God that the people of Israel said that they worshiped. Zedekiah also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had forced him to solemnly promise using God's name to be loyal to him. Zedekiah became very stubborn. ¹⁴Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and also the people of Judah became more wicked again, doing all the disgusting things that the people of the other nations did, and causing the temple in Jerusalem that Yahweh had caused to be holy to become an unacceptable place to worship him.

¹⁵Yahweh, the God whom the ancestors of the people of Judah worshiped, gave messages to his prophets many times, and the prophets gave those messages to the people of Judah. Yahweh did that because he pitied his people and did not want his temple to be destroyed. ¹⁶But the people continually made fun of God's messengers. They despised God's messages. They ridiculed his prophets, until finally God became extremely angry with his people, with the result that nothing could stop him from destroying Judah. ¹⁷He incited the king of Babylonia to attack Judah with his army. They killed the young men with their swords, even in the temple. They did not spare anyone, either young men or young women or old people. God enabled the army of Nebuchadnezzar to defeat all of them. ¹⁸His soldiers took to Babylon all the things that were used in God's temple, big things and little things, all the valuable things, and the valuable things that belonged to the king and his officials. ¹⁹They burned the temple, and they broke down the wall surrounding Jerusalem. They burned all the palaces in Jerusalem and destroyed all the remaining valuable things there.

²⁰Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took to Babylon the remaining people who had not been killed with their swords, Those people became the king's slaves and his son's slaves, until the army of Persia conquered Babylonia. ²¹Moses had said that every seventh year the people must not plant their fields; they must allow the soil to rest. But the people had not done that. So after the army of Babylonia destroyed Judah, the soil was allowed to rest. That continued for seventy years, fulfilling what Yahweh had told Jeremiah would happen.

²²During the first year that Cyrus was the king of Persia, in order that what Yahweh told Jeremiah would happen would occur, Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write this and proclaim it throughout his kingdom:

²³"I, Cyrus, the king of Persia, declare that Yahweh, the God who rules in heaven, has enabled me to become the ruler of all the kingdoms of this world. And he has appointed me to command that my workers build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. I am allowing any of his people among you to go to Jerusalem. And I will pray that Yahweh will be with them."

Ezra

Chapter 1

¹During the first year after Cyrus, king of Persia, {conquered the kingdom of Babylon,} Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write a message. Yahweh did this in order to fulfill a prophecy that Jeremiah had spoken. Cyrus sent messengers throughout his empire with copies of the message and he ordered them to proclaim it as they went. This is what they proclaimed:

²"I, King Cyrus, rule the Persian Empire, and I say this: Yahweh, the God who is in heaven, has made me ruler over the great kingdoms of this part of the world. Now he has assigned me to {make sure that his people} build a temple for him in {the city of} Jerusalem in {the province of} Judah. ³All you people who belong to God may go up to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this temple for Yahweh. He is the God who is in Jerusalem, the God whom the people of Israel worship. And may God give you success! ⁴There are other people who are living around the Israelites in the places where the Israelites have been living since their ancestors were exiled here. Those people must contribute silver and gold to the Israelites who go. They must also give to the Israelites animals and {any} supplies {that they might need}. They should also give them other gifts that they can use to help build the temple of God in Jerusalem."

⁵Then God motivated some of the priests and Levites and {some of} the clan leaders from {the tribes of} Judah and Benjamin to return to Jerusalem. Those whom God motivated got ready to return to Jerusalem and build the temple for him there. ⁶Many of their neighbors helped them by giving them silver and golden things, animals, and supplies for the journey. They also gave them other valuable gifts, and they gave them money to buy things for building the temple. ⁷King Cyrus also commanded {his servants} to bring out the valuable things that King Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers had taken from the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem and had put in the temples of their gods {in Babylon}. ⁸{Specifically,} King Cyrus of Persia commanded Mithredath, his treasurer, {to command his servants} to bring out all of these items and to give each one of them to Sheshbazzar, the leader of {the group that was going to return to} Judah. ⁹This is a list of the items {that Cyrus donated}: 30 gold basins, 1,000 silver basins, 29 knives, ¹⁰30 gold bowls, 410 secondary silver bowls, and 1,000 other utensils. ¹¹All together, Cyrus gave 5, 400 silver and gold items to Sheshbazzar to take with him when he and the others returned from {the kingdom of} Babylon to Jerusalem.

Chapter 2

¹{Many years ago, the army of} King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had captured many Israelite people and taken them away to the kingdom of Babylon. Now, these Israelite people began to return to Judah. Some returned to Jerusalem, and some returned to other places in Judah. Each of them went to the towns where their ancestors had lived. This is a list of the groups who returned. ²The leaders of those people who returned were Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The groups of people who returned to Judah are listed next.

³2, 172 descendants of Parosh,

⁴372 descendants of Shephatiah,

⁵775 descendants of Arach,

⁶2, 812 descendants of Pahath-Moab, from the families of Jeshua and Joab,

- ⁷1, 254 descendants of Elam,
⁸945 descendants of Zattu,
⁹760 descendants of Zaccai,
¹⁰642 descendants of Bani,
¹¹623 descendants of Bebai,
¹²1, 222 descendants of Azgad,
¹³666 descendants of Adonikam,
¹⁴2, 056 descendants of Bigvai,
¹⁵454 descendants of Adin,
¹⁶98 descendants of Ater, who descended from Hezekiah,
¹⁷323 descendants of Bezai,
¹⁸112 descendants of Jorah,
¹⁹223 descendants of Hashum,
²⁰95 descendants of Gibbar.
²¹{The following is a list of people whose ancestors had lived in these towns in Judah:}
123 from Bethlehem,
²²56 from Netophah,
²³128 from Anathoth,
²⁴42 from Azmaveth,
²⁵743 from Kiriath Arim, Kephirah, and Beeroth,
²⁶621 from Ramah and Geba,
²⁷122 from Michmas,
²⁸223 from Bethel and Ai,
²⁹52 from Nebo,
³⁰156 from Magbish,
³¹1, 254 from the other Elam,
³²320 from Harim,
³³725 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono,
³⁴345 from Jericho,
³⁵3, 630 from Senaah.

³⁶These are the priests who returned:

973 descendants of Jedaiah (that is, those who descended through Jeshua),

³⁷1, 052 descendants of Immer,

³⁸1, 247 descendants of Pashur,

³⁹1, 017 descendants of Harim,

⁴⁰These are the descendants of Levi who returned:

74 descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, who were from the family of Hodaviah,

⁴¹128 musicians who were descendants of Asaph,

⁴²139 gatekeepers who were descendants of the gatekeepers Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai,

⁴³The following is a list of the temple workers who returned. They were the descendants of these men: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, ⁴⁴Keros, Siaha, Padon, ⁴⁵Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, ⁴⁶Hagab, Shalmal, Hanan, ⁴⁷Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, ⁴⁸Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, ⁴⁹Uzza, Paseah, Besai, ⁵⁰Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim, ⁵¹Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, ⁵²Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, ⁵³Barkos, Sisera, Temah, ⁵⁴Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁵⁵The following descendants of King Solomon's servants returned {to Jerusalem}. They were the descendants of these men: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, ⁵⁶Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, ⁵⁷Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth Hazzebaim, and Ami. ⁵⁸Altogether, there were 392 descendants of temple workers and Solomon's servants who returned.

⁵⁹There was another group that returned {to Judah} from {the towns of} Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cerub, Addon, and Immer {in Babylonia}. But they could not prove that they were genuine Israelites. ⁶⁰This group included 652 people who were descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda. ⁶¹The descendants of the priests in this group included people belonging to Habaiah's clan, Hakkoz's clan, and Barzillai's clan. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the name of his father-in-law's clan for himself.

⁶²The people in this group searched in the documents that listed the names {of the descendants} from the {various Israelite} clans, but they did not find {their names there}. So the officials did not permit them to do the work that priests did. ⁶³The governor told these men that they could not eat the shares of the sacrifices that only the priests could eat until a {high} priest could consult Yahweh by using the sacred lots {to determine that they truly were descendants of priestly families. Only if the high priest determined that these men truly were priests could they eat the most sacred food}.

⁶⁴Altogether in this group, 42, 360 Israelite people returned to Judah. ⁶⁵The Israelites also brought along with them 7, 337 male and female servants and 200 male and female musicians. ⁶⁶The Israelites also brought with them {from Babylonia} 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁷435 camels, and 6, 720 donkeys.

⁶⁸When they arrived at {the ruins of} the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, some of the clan leaders gave money for the supplies needed to rebuild the temple in the same place where the old temple had been. ⁶⁹Each one gave as much as he was able to give for the work {on the temple}. Altogether, they gave 61,000 gold coins, 5,000 silver bars, and 100 robes for the priests.

⁷⁰So all of these priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants, and other people returned to live in the towns and villages {of the province of Judah}. They settled in the places where their ancestors had lived.

Chapter 3

¹After the Israelite people {returned and} began to live in their towns, in the autumn of that year, they all gathered together in Jerusalem. ²Then Joshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates all began to rebuild the altar of the God of Israel. They did that so that they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it. They wanted to follow what the prophet Moses had written in the laws that God had given to him. ³Even though they were afraid of the people who were already living in that area, they rebuilt the altar at the same place where the previous altar had been. They began to offer sacrifices to Yahweh on it every morning and every evening. ⁴{Fifteen days after they started to offer these sacrifices,} the people celebrated the Festival of Shelters. {Moses had commanded them to do this in the decrees that God had given to him.} Each day the priests offered the sacrifices that were required for that day. ⁵From then on, they presented the regular burnt offerings and the {other required} offerings{. These were} for the New Moon festivals and the other festivals that they celebrated as special times each year to honor Yahweh. They also brought other offerings to Yahweh just because they wanted to{, not because they were required to bring them}. ⁶But even though they started bringing burnt offerings to Yahweh at the beginning of autumn, they had not yet started rebuilding the temple. ⁷So the {leaders of the} Israelites hired stone-cutters and carpenters {to do the construction work}. They also bought logs of cedar trees from the people of {the cities of} Tyre and Sidon. To pay for the logs, the Israelites sent grain, wine, and olive oil to those people. Since King Cyrus had said that the Israelites could buy these things, the people of Tyre and Sidon {agreed. They} brought the logs down from the mountains in Lebanon {to the Mediterranean seacoast} and then floated them along the coast to {the city of} Joppa. {Then they brought the logs inland from Joppa up to Jerusalem.}

⁸The Israelites started to rebuild the temple in the second month of the second year after they had returned to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Joshua the son of Jozadak, their fellow leaders the priests and the Levites, and all the people who had come from where their enemies had taken them to Jerusalem supported this project. The leaders assigned the Levites who were twenty years old and older to supervise this work of rebuilding the temple for Yahweh. ⁹Jeshua, his sons, and his other relatives, and Kadmiel and his sons together helped to supervise those who were doing the work on the temple. They were all descendants of Judah. The sons and grandsons of Henadad along with the rest of their fellow Levites {joined in the work}. ¹⁰When the builders finished laying the foundation of the temple of Yahweh, the priests and the Levites did what King David had told Asaph and the other musicians to do {many years previously} in order to praise Yahweh. The priests put on their robes and stood in their places, blowing their trumpets. Then the Levites who were descendants of Asaph clashed their cymbals. ¹¹Then the Levites praised Yahweh and thanked him by singing this song about him:

"He is very good to us!

He will continue to be faithful and kind to us Israelites {and he will love us} forever." Then all the people shouted loudly. They praised Yahweh because they had finished laying the foundation of his temple. ¹²Many of the old priests, Levites, and leaders of families remembered seeing the first temple. They cried aloud when they saw the workers lay the foundation of this temple {because they thought that this temple would not be as big or as beautiful as the first temple}. But the other people shouted joyfully in loud voices. ¹³Since the shouting was so loud, no one could tell the difference between the people who were shouting joyfully and the people who were crying sorrowfully. All the noise was so loud that even people far away could hear it.

Chapter 4

¹The enemies of {the people of the tribes of} Judah and Benjamin learned that the Israelites who had returned from Babylon were rebuilding the temple for Yahweh, the God whom the people of Israel worship. ²So they approached Zerubbabel the governor and the other clan leaders and {deceptively} said to them, "We want to help you to build the temple. After all, we also worship your God. We have been offering sacrifices to him since the time that Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, brought us here."

³But Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the other Jewish clan leaders replied, "We will not allow you to help us build a temple for our God. No, we alone will build it for Yahweh, the God whom Israel worships, because that is what King Cyrus of Persia told us to do."

⁴Then the people who had been living in that land {before the Israelites returned there} started doing things to make the Jews discouraged and afraid to continue building {the temple}. ⁵They bribed government officials to prevent the Jews from fulfilling their plans {to rebuild the temple and the city}. They did that all during the time that Cyrus was king of Persia, and continued to do it during {the time of the kings after him, including} the time when Darius was king of Persia.

⁶These enemies of the Jews continued to accuse them during the time that {Darius' son} Ahasuerus was king. When Ahasuerus became king, they wrote a letter to him in which they accused the people living in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem {of planning to rebel against the government}.

⁷Then again during the time of Artaxerxes, {who was the next} king of Persia, the enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to him. Some men named Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel were the leaders of this group. They had someone write the letter for them in the Aramaic language, using the Aramaic alphabet.

⁸Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, agreed that they could write the letter to King Artaxerxes {with their authority} to protest about what was happening in Jerusalem. This is what they wrote:

⁹From Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the provincial secretary, and others with us who are judges and other government officials{. We represent the people} from {the areas of} Persia, Erech, Babylon, and Susa in the district of Elam, ¹⁰as well as the other people groups whom the great and glorious Ashurbanipal had deported and sent to live in cities in Samaria and in the rest of the province west of the {Euphrates} River. Therefore: ¹¹{This is what they wrote in the letter that they sent to him:}

This letter is for King Artaxerxes. It comes from the officials serving you who live in the province west of the Euphrates River. Therefore:

¹²"Your Majesty, we want you to know that the Jews who left from your territories are now living near us. They are rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. These people are wicked and want to rebel against you. Therefore, they are now rebuilding the walls {of that city} and repairing the foundations {of its buildings}. ¹³It is important for you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, they will stop paying any taxes. As a result, there will be less money in your treasury.

¹⁴So, because we are loyal to you, and because we do not want anyone to humiliate you, for these reasons we are sending this information to you. ¹⁵We suggest that you {order your officials to} search among the records that your predecessors kept. {If you do that,} you will find out that the people in this city have always rebelled against their rulers. You will find out that these people have withheld taxes from kings and from rulers of provinces. You will find out that from long ago the leaders of this city have started rebellions. That is the reason why {the Babylonian army} destroyed this city. ¹⁶We want you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, then you will no longer be able to control {any of the people in} this province west of the {Euphrates} River."

¹⁷{After} the king {read this letter, he} sent this reply to them:

"To you, Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, and your colleagues in Samaria and in other parts of the province that is west of the {Euphrates} River, I send my greetings. Therefore:

¹⁸My officials carefully read out loud to me the letter that you sent to us. ¹⁹Then I ordered my officials to search {the records}. I have found out that {what you said is true.} The people of Jerusalem have repeatedly revolted against their rulers, beginning a long time ago. ²⁰{In the past,} powerful kings ruled in Jerusalem. They also ruled over the whole province west of the {Euphrates} River. They forced the people there to pay them all kinds of taxes.

²¹Therefore, you must command those Jews to stop rebuilding the city. They will only be allowed to resume if I tell them that they may rebuild it. ²²Do this immediately, because I do not want those people to do anything more that will cause me to lose {any territory or income}."

²³Then King Artaxerxes sent {messengers with} a copy of the letter to Rehum and Shimshai the provincial secretary and their colleagues. As soon as the messengers finished reading it out loud to them, Rehum and Shimshai and their colleagues went quickly to the Jews in Jerusalem, and they forced the Jews to stop rebuilding {the city}.

²⁴{Because the enemies of the Jews kept opposing them so strongly in these ways,} the Jews had stopped rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. They did not do any more work to rebuild the temple until the second year after Darius had become the king of Persia.

Chapter 5

¹At that time two prophets were giving messages from God to the Jews living in Jerusalem and in other cities in Judah{, saying that they should continue rebuilding the temple}. Those prophets were Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Iddo. They spoke their messages representing the God whom the people of Israel worshiped, the one who ruled them. ²So Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak led many other people to start rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem again. God's prophets Haggai and Zechariah were with them and helping them.

³But then Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai went to Jerusalem together with some of their officials and said to the people, "Who has permitted you to do all this work to rebuild this temple?" ⁴They also asked the Jews to tell them the names of the men who were working on this temple.

⁵However, God was taking care of the Jewish leaders, and their enemies did not make them stop {building the temple}. Instead, the enemies sent King Darius a report and waited for him to send back a decree about it. {The decree would either allow the Jewish leaders to finish their work on the temple, or else it would command them to stop their work completely}.

⁶This is a copy of the report that Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-the-River, Shethar-Bozenai, and their associates, {who were} the officials of the province of Beyond-the-River, sent to King Darius. ⁷When they sent the report to him, this is what they wrote in it:

"King Darius, we hope everything is going well for you.

⁸We want you to know that we went to the temple of the great God in the province of Judah. The people are building it with huge stones, and they are putting wooden beams in the walls. They are doing this work very carefully, and they are making good progress.

⁹So we asked the Jewish leaders, 'Who has permitted you to rebuild this temple?' ¹⁰We also asked them for the names of their leaders so that we could write them down and so that we could inform you who their leaders were.

¹¹This is what they told us in reply. They said, 'We serve the God who created heaven and earth. We are rebuilding his temple, which a great king of Israel originally completed many years ago. ¹²But our ancestors did things that caused God, who is in heaven, to become very angry. So God allowed {the armies of} Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, a Chaldean, to conquer them. His armies destroyed that temple, and they took many of the Israelite people to Babylon.

¹³However, during the first year that Cyrus ruled as king of Babylon, he decreed that our people could rebuild the temple for God. ¹⁴There had been a lot of containers made of gold and silver in the temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar took them from the temple in Jerusalem and brought them to a temple {for his god} in Babylon. Later, King Cyrus removed those containers from that temple in Babylon and gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he appointed as governor {of Judah}. ¹⁵King Cyrus told Sheshbazzar to take these containers and put them back in the temple in Jerusalem. He also decreed that the Jews should rebuild the temple at the place

where it had been before. ¹⁶So Sheshbazzar came here to Jerusalem and {supervised the men who} laid the foundation of this temple. And since that time, the people have been working on the temple, but they have not finished it yet.'

¹⁷Therefore, your Majesty, please order your officials to search in the place in Babylon where you keep the royal records. Have them find out whether or not it is true that King Cyrus decreed that the Jews should rebuild this temple of God in Jerusalem. Then please tell us what you would like us to do about this matter."

Chapter 6

¹So King Darius commanded his servants to search in the places where he kept important records there in the kingdom of Babylon. ²They {searched, and they} found a scroll {that contained the information that they wanted to know} in the fortress city of Ecbatana in the province of Media. This is what that scroll said:

³"During the first year that King Cyrus ruled the empire, he sent out a decree concerning the temple of God that was in Jerusalem. He said, 'I command that the Jews shall build a new temple in the same place where they had previously offered sacrifices. They must make the temple 27 meters high and 27 meters wide. ⁴They must build the temple from large stones. {After putting down} three layers of stones, {the workers must put} a layer of new timber {on top of them}. I will pay for this work with money from the royal treasury. ⁵I also give back {to the Jews} the gold and silver containers that had belonged to the temple of God but that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon. The Jews must take these and return them to the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews must put each one back in its original place in the temple of God.'"

⁶{After learning this from the scroll, King Darius had a scribe write that information in a letter that he sent to the leaders of the enemies of the Jews in Jerusalem. He also included this message:} "This is a message for you, Tattenai, the governor of {the province} west of the {Euphrates} River, for you, Shethar-Bozenai, and for all of your associates, who are the officials of that province: Stay away from there! ⁷Allow them to continue the work of rebuilding that temple of God. Allow the governor of the Jews and their elders to lead their people in building this new temple on the same site as the former temple. ⁸Furthermore, I command you to help these leaders of the Jews {in the following ways} as they rebuild this temple of God. You must be sure to give these men funds so that they can continue the building work. Take the money from my treasury, from the tribute you collect in {the province} west of the {Euphrates} River. ⁹The priests in Jerusalem need animals to sacrifice as burnt offerings to the God who is in heaven. This may include young bulls or rams or lambs. They may also need wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil {to go with those sacrifices}. Make sure that you diligently give them whatever they demand of those things every day. ¹⁰When you do that, they will be able to offer sacrifices that please the God who is in heaven, and they will be able to pray that God will bless me and my sons.

¹¹This is what I command about anyone who disobeys this decree. My soldiers will pull a beam from his house {and sharpen one end of it}. Then they will bury the other end of the beam in the ground so that it stands upright. Then they will pick that person up and ram his body onto the {sharpened} beam. Then they will completely destroy that person's house until only a pile of rubble is left, because he disobeyed me. ¹²God himself has chosen that city of Jerusalem as the place where people will honor him. May he get rid of any king or any nation that tries to change this decree or destroy that temple in Jerusalem! I, Darius, make this decree. You must completely obey it."

¹³Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates {read the message from King Darius and} immediately obeyed what the message from King Darius commanded them to do. ¹⁴So the Jewish leaders continued to progress in their work of rebuilding {the temple}. The messages that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo preached encouraged them greatly. The people worked until they completed {the temple}, just as their God had commanded them to do, and just as the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius had decreed, and as the Persian king Artaxerxes {would decree later}. ¹⁵The people finished building this temple on the third day of the month of Adar, during the sixth year that King Darius ruled {the kingdom of Persia}.

¹⁶Then the people of Israel, {that is,} the priests, the Levites, and everyone else who had returned from Babylonia, joyfully dedicated this temple to God. ¹⁷During the ceremony to dedicate this temple to God, they sacrificed 100 young bulls, 200 rams, and 400 lambs. They also sacrificed 12 male goats as an offering so that God would forgive the sins of all the people, because that was how many tribes there were in Israel. ¹⁸Then the Jewish leaders divided the priests and Levites into groups that would take turns serving in the temple of God in Jerusalem. They did this according to what Moses had written {many years previously} in the law.

¹⁹On the fourteenth day of the first month, the Jews who had returned from Babylonia celebrated the Passover Festival. ²⁰{To qualify themselves for offering the sacrifices,} all the priests and Levites had already purified themselves by performing the proper rituals. Then they slaughtered the lambs for the benefit of everyone who had returned from Babylonia, for the other priests, and for themselves. ²¹All of the Israelite people celebrated the Passover. This included the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia and the people who had separated themselves from the people of the area around them who worshiped other gods. They separated themselves from those people and joined the Israelites so that they could worship Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped. ²²Then for the next seven days, they joyfully celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread. They were joyful because Yahweh had caused the king of Assyria to be favorable to them. As a result, the king had helped them to rebuild the temple of God, the God whom Israel worshiped.

Chapter 7

¹Many years later, during the time when Artaxerxes was the king of Persia, {there was a man named} Ezra{. He} was a descendant of Seraiah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the son of Hilkiah. ²Hilkiah was the son of Shallum, who was the son of Zadok, who was a descendant of Ahitub, ³who was a descendant of Amariah, who was the son of Azariah, who was a descendant of Meraioth, ⁴who was the son of Zerahiah, who was the son of Uzzi, who was the son of Bukki, ⁵who was the son of Abishua, who was the son of Phinehas, who was the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron, the {first} Supreme Priest. ⁶This man Ezra knew the laws of Moses very well. Those were the laws that Yahweh had given to the people who worship him, the Israelite people. {Ezra asked the king for many things and} the king gave Ezra everything that he asked for because Yahweh, the God whom Ezra worshiped, caused all of it to go well for him. Then Ezra traveled from Babylon {to Jerusalem}.

⁷Many Israelite people came with Ezra to Jerusalem, including some priests, some Levites, some musicians, some gatekeepers, and some {of the descendants of} men who worked in the temple. That was during the seventh year that Artaxerxes was the king of Persia. ⁸Ezra {and the group with him} arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year that Artaxerxes was king.

⁹Consider this: They started out from Babylon on the first day of the first month. They arrived safely in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month of that year. God certainly acted very kindly toward them. ¹⁰{God made Ezra's journey successful} because Ezra had devoted himself to studying the laws of Yahweh and understanding how to obey them. He had also devoted himself to teach everything in those laws to the Israelite people.

¹¹King Artaxerxes gave a letter to Ezra the priest and scribe who studied what Yahweh had commanded in the law that Yahweh had given to Israel. This is what the letter said:

¹²"This letter is from Artaxerxes, the greatest of the kings. I am giving it to Ezra the priest, who has carefully studied the law that the God who is in heaven gave {to the Israelite people}. Greetings. This is what I want you to know:

¹³I am commanding that any of the Israelite people in my kingdom may go with you to Jerusalem if they want to go. That includes priests and Levites.

¹⁴I, the king, and my seven advisors are sending you to investigate whether the people of Judah and Jerusalem are following the law of your God that you carry. ¹⁵We are also telling you to take with you the silver and gold that I and my advisors will give to you. We give it freely to the God of Israel who has a temple in Jerusalem. ¹⁶You should

also take any silver and gold that {the people in} the entire province of Babylonia may give to you. Add that to the money that the Israelite people and the priests freely give for you to use at the temple of their God in Jerusalem.

¹⁷Then carefully use this money to buy the bulls, rams, and lambs that the priests will burn on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem. Also buy the grain and wine that go with these offerings.

¹⁸If there is any silver or gold left over {after you buy all of those things}, you and your companions may use it to buy whatever you think that your God wants you to buy. ¹⁹We have also given to you some {valuable} containers for the priests to use in the temple of your God. Take all of them to your God in Jerusalem. ²⁰If you need to supply any other things for the temple of your God, I permit you to get the money {to pay for those things} from the royal treasury.

²¹And I, King Artaxerxes, personally command this to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: Ezra is a priest who has carefully studied the laws of the God who is in heaven. If there is anything that he requests, give it to him quickly. ²²Give him up to three and one-third metric tons of silver, up to 500 bushels of wheat, up to two and one-fifth kiloliters of wine, up to the same amount of olive oil, and all the salt that he requests. ²³Be sure that you provide everything that the God who is in heaven requires for his temple. We certainly do not want this God to be angry with me or with my descendants{, who will later be kings, because I did not provide what he required}. ²⁴By means of this letter, I also prohibit you from collecting tax payments of any kind from any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, or any men who work in the temple. They are exempt from taxes {because} they serve in the temple of this God. ²⁵Now I will address you, Ezra. The God whom you worship has made you wise. Therefore, I want you to appoint men who can settle disputes between people and interpret God's laws for all {of the Jews} in the province west of the Euphrates River. They must do this for all of those who know the laws of this God, and all of you must teach God's laws to those who do not know them. ²⁶{You and the men whom you appoint} must make sure to severely punish everyone who does not obey my law or the law of the God whom you worship. You may decide whether to execute them or to send them out of the country or to take away all of their property or to put them in prison."

²⁷{When I, Ezra, read this letter, I said,} "Praise Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped! He has caused the king to want to honor his temple in Jerusalem. ²⁸God also acted very kindly to me by causing the king and his advisors and all of his powerful officials to want to help me. When I saw how Yahweh, the God whom I worship, was making all of my plans succeed, I boldly asked some of the Israelite leaders to go {to Jerusalem} with me."

Chapter 8

¹"This is a list of the names of the clan leaders, along with the names of their clans, who traveled {to Jerusalem} with me from Babylonia when Artaxerxes was king {of Persia}:

²Gershom from the clan descended from {Aaron's grandson} Phinehas.

Daniel from the clan descended from {Aaron's son} Ithamar.

Hattush from the clan descended from {King} David. ³{Hattush was also} a descendant of Shecaniah.

Zechariah and 150 other men from the clan descended from Parosh.

⁴Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah and 200 other men from the clan descended from Pahath-Moab.

⁵Shecaniah son of Jahaziel and 300 other men from the clan descended from {Zattu}.

⁶Ebed son of Jonathan and 50 other men from the clan descended from Adin.

⁷Jeshaiah son of Athaliah and 70 other men from the clan descended from Elam.

⁸Zebadiah son of Michael and 80 other men from the clan descended from Shephatiah.

⁹Obadiah son of Jehiel and 218 other men from the clan descended from Joab.

¹⁰Shelomith son of Josiphiah and 160 other men from the clan descended from {Bani}.

¹¹Zechariah son of Bebai and 28 other men from the clan descended from {another man whose name was} Bebai.

¹²Johanan son of Hakkatan and 110 other men from the clan descended from Azgad.

¹³Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah and 60 other men from the clan descended from Adonikam. They were the last three leaders from the clan descended from Adonikam {that had not returned earlier with Zerubbabel}.

¹⁴Uthai and Zaccur and 70 other men from the clan descended from Bigvai.

¹⁵{This is an account of how we traveled to Jerusalem.} I gathered together all of these Israelites at the canal that goes from Babylon to Ahava. We set up our tents and stayed there for three days. {During that time} I interviewed the people and the priests and discovered that there were no Levites among us. ¹⁶So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, {another man named} Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were all leaders of the people. I also summoned Joiarib and {a third man named} Elnathan, who were wise. ¹⁷I sent them all to Iddo, a Levite leader who was living in a place called Kasiphia. I told them what to say to Iddo and to his fellow Levites, the {descendants of} temple workers whom he oversaw there. I wanted them to send us some men who would {go with us to} work in the temple of our God.

¹⁸Because God acted kindly toward us, they brought us a very wise man named Sherebiah and 18 of his sons and other relatives. He was a descendant of Mahli, who was a grandson of Levi, the son of Israel. ¹⁹{They} also {sent to us} Hashabiah, along with Jeshaiiah, and 20 of his brothers and their sons. Both men were descendants of Merari {the son of Levi}. ²⁰They also sent 220 other men to work in the temple. King David and his officials had appointed the ancestors of these men to assist the Levites. I listed the names of all of these men.

²¹There alongside the Ahava Canal, I announced a time for all of us to abstain from eating food {and to pray}. {I told them that this was a time} to humble ourselves in the presence of our God and to pray that God would protect us, our children, and our possessions while we traveled. ²²Previously we had told the king that our God takes care of all those who truly trust in him, but that he powerfully punishes everyone who refuses to obey him. So I would have been ashamed to ask the king to send soldiers and men riding on horses to protect us from our enemies while we were traveling along the road. ²³So we abstained from eating food and we asked our God to protect us. We prayed to him, and he answered our prayer.

²⁴I chose 12 of the leaders of the priests and brought them together with Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten of the other Levites. ²⁵I assigned to each of them a portion of the gifts of silver and gold and the other valuable items {to transport to Jerusalem}. These were the items that the king and his advisors and other officials, and the Israelite people who were living in Babylonia, had contributed for the temple of our God. ²⁶As I gave these various items to those men, I weighed each of the items. This was the total: about 21 and one half metric tons of silver, items made from silver that altogether weighed three and one third metric tons, three and one third metric tons of gold, ²⁷20 gold bowls that altogether weighed about eight and one-half kilograms, and two items made of beautiful polished bronze that were as valuable as ones made of gold. ²⁸I said to those priests and Levites, 'I have set you apart from the others to serve Yahweh in a special way. The people have also set apart these valuable things for only him. The people also gave the silver and the gold voluntarily as an offering to Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped. ²⁹So guard them carefully. When we arrive in Jerusalem, weigh them out where the leading priests and Levites and the other leaders of the Israelite clans can see them. {They will then put them} in the storerooms in the temple of Yahweh.'

³⁰So these priests and Levites said that they would be responsible to transport all of the {gifts of} silver and gold and other valuable items to the temple of our God in Jerusalem.

³¹On the twelfth day of the first month, we left the Ahava Canal and started to travel to Jerusalem. Our God took care of us, and while we traveled, he prevented any enemies from attacking or robbing us. ³²After we arrived in

Jerusalem, we rested for three days. ³³Then on the fourth day we went to the temple of our God. There the priests and Levites weighed out the silver and gold and the other items and gave them to the leaders there. The leaders there were two priests, Meremoth the son of Uriah and Eleazar the son of Phinehas, and two Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui. ³⁴They counted everything, and wrote down how much each item weighed, and wrote a description of each one as they received it.

³⁵The Babylonian soldiers had captured our ancestors and taken them away to Babylon, but now we who are their descendants have safely returned {to Israel}. So we offered sacrifices of burnt offerings to our God: 12 bulls, {one} for {each of the 12 tribes of} the Israelite people, 96 rams, and 77 lambs. We also sacrificed 12 male goats to atone for the sins {that all of the Israelite people had committed}. We offered all of these sacrifices to Yahweh by putting them on the fire {of the altar}.

³⁶Some of us who had returned from Babylonia took the letter that the king had given to us to the governors of the king's provinces and to the officials of the province west of the Euphrates River. {After they read the letter,} they did what the king commanded for us {Israelite} people and for the temple of God."

Chapter 9

¹"After that, {some of} the {Jewish} leaders came to me and said, 'Many Israelites and {even some} priests and Levites have not kept themselves from doing what the other people who are living in this land do. They are doing the same disgusting things that those people do. Those people are from the Canaanite, Hittite, Perizzite, Jebusite, Ammonite, Moabite, Egyptian, and Amorite people groups. ²Specifically, some Israelite men have married women from these groups, and they have allowed their sons to do the same thing. So they are making us, God's sacred people, to be no longer distinct from the other groups that live here. In fact, some of our leaders and officials have been the first ones to betray God in this way!'

³When I heard that, {I was so sad and angry that} I tore my clothes and my robe. I even pulled out some hair from my head and my beard. Then I sat down. I was very dismayed. ⁴Many of the Jews still respected God's commandment {not to marry foreign women}, and they were upset and afraid because some of those who had returned from Babylonia had disobeyed it. They gathered around me as I sat there dismayed until the time of the evening sacrifice.

⁵When it was time to offer the evening sacrifice, I stopped sitting there, silently showing how ashamed and sad I felt. Still wearing those torn clothes, I got on my knees and opened my hands {in prayer} to Yahweh, my God, ⁶and this is what I prayed: 'God, I belong to you. Yet I am very ashamed even to approach you in prayer. This is because the sins that we Israelites have committed are very bad. It is as though our sins are so many that they have risen up in a heap that is higher than our heads. We are so guilty for committing those sins that it is as though the heap of them has risen all the way up to you in heaven. ⁷Since the time of our ancestors until now, we{, the Jewish people,} have been very guilty of sinning {against you}. That is the reason why you, God, allowed {the armies of} the kings of other lands to do whatever they wanted to do with our people and with our kings and our priests. They killed {many of} them, they captured {many of} them, they robbed {many of} them, and they caused them all to be disgraced, just as we are today.

⁸But for just a little while now, Yahweh our God, you have been kind to us. You have allowed some of us to survive. You have given us a secure home in your sacred place. You have made us joyful and given us some freedom, even though the Persian king is still our master. ⁹Yes, we are like slaves, but even so, you have not abandoned us. Instead, you have caused the kings of Persia to act very kindly toward us. They have given us some freedom and allowed us to rebuild your temple, which had been destroyed. They have allowed us to live safely here in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.

¹⁰Our God, there is nothing that we can say now to defend ourselves after all {of the sinful things that we have done}. We have continued to disobey your commands. ¹¹They are the commands that you gave to your servants, the prophets, to tell to us. They told us that it was as though the land that we would occupy was a filthy land

because the people who live there do disgusting things. They said that those people continually do shameful things, making it seem like the land is full of filth from one end to the other. ¹²{They said,} ‘Therefore do not allow your daughters to marry their sons! Do not allow your sons to marry their daughters! Do not ever try to cause things to go well for those people! If you obey these instructions, your nation will be strong. You will enjoy the good crops that grow on the land, and the land will belong to your descendants forever.’

¹³But you punished us because we became very guilty for doing wicked things. Still, you, our God, have not punished us as much as we deserve for you to punish us. I say this because you have allowed this group of us to survive. ¹⁴However, some of us are again disobeying your commands. Some of us have married women from the people groups that do those detestable things. If we continue to do that, you will be so angry with us that you will destroy us completely, leaving none of us to survive!

¹⁵Yahweh, God of Israel, you always do the right thing! Because of that, you have continually allowed some of us to survive, just as you have done with this group now. But we acknowledge that we are guilty of disobeying you and so because of what we have done, we do not deserve even to pray to you.”

Chapter 10

¹Ezra prostrated himself on the ground in front of the temple as he cried and prayed {to God}. He was confessing {to God the sins that the people had committed}. While he was doing that, a very large crowd of Israelites gathered around him, consisting of men, women, and children. They all cried very, very much {because they had sinned against God}.

²Then Shecaniah, the son of Jehiel from the clan of Elam, spoke. He said this to Ezra: “We have disobeyed our God. Some of us have married women who are not Israelites. They come from the other people groups that live around us. But we can still hope {that Yahweh will be merciful to} us Israelite people. ³Here is what I suggest. We should do what God told us to do in his laws. We should make an agreement with our God that we will divorce our foreign wives and send them away with their children. We will do everything according to what you, sir, and the others who greatly respect what our God has commanded, tell us to do. ⁴Since you are our leader, get going, and be courageous, and do {what is necessary to fix this problem}. We will do whatever you say.”

⁵So Ezra acted {to fix the problem}. He demanded that all of the Israelite people, including the leaders of the priests and the Levites, solemnly declare that they would do what Shekaniah said that they should do. So they all solemnly promised {to do that}. ⁶Then Ezra went away from in front of the temple and went to the room where Jehohanan the grandson of Eliashib lived. Ezra continued to grieve because some of the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia had not faithfully obeyed God’s laws. So while he was there, he did not eat or drink anything.

⁷Then the leaders sent a message to all the people in the province of Judan and the city of Jerusalem. They told them that all the Jews who had returned from Babylonia had to come to Jerusalem immediately. ⁸The leaders announced the following penalties for anyone who did not arrive within three days. They would take away all the property belonging to that person, and they would banish that person from the community of Israelites. ⁹So within three days, by the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the men from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin gathered in Jerusalem. They were sitting in the courtyard in front of the temple. They were trembling because it was raining hard and {because they were worried that they would be punished} for what they had done.

¹⁰Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “Some of you have sinned very badly {against God}. Specifically, you have married women who are not Israelites. By doing that, you have made us Israelite people more guilty than we were before. ¹¹So now, confess your sin to Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, and do what he commands. {That is,} separate yourselves from the people of other nations by divorcing your foreign wives.”

¹²The whole group answered, shouting loudly, “Yes, we must do what you have said.” ¹³{Then one of them said,} “But we are a very large group, and it is raining hard. We cannot continue to stand outside in this rain. Also, since

many of us have committed this sin, it will take a long time to make things right again. ¹⁴So please allow our leaders to decide what we should all do. Tell everyone in each city who has married a woman who is not an Israelite to come at a time that you decide. They should each come with the elders and judges from their own city. If we do that, our God will stop being angry with us because of what we have done.”

¹⁵{Within the crowd,} Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah said that they disagreed with this plan. Then Meshullam and Shabbethai, a descendant of Levi, said that they agreed with Jonathan and Jahzeiah. ¹⁶But {they were the only ones who opposed the plan; all of} the others who had returned from Babylonia said that they would do it. So Ezra the priest chose men who were leaders from each of the clans and wrote down their names. On the first day of the tenth month these men met to investigate the matter. ¹⁷By the first day of the first month {of the next year} they had finished determining which men had married women who were not Israelites.

¹⁸They determined that some of the descendants of the priests had married foreign women. These included some descendants of Joshua the son of Jozadak and of his brothers. Their names were Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. ¹⁹They solemnly promised to divorce their wives and they each offered a ram as a sacrifice to atone for their sins.

²⁰In the clan of Immer there were Hanani and Zebadiah.

²¹In the clan of Harim there were Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah.

²²In the clan of Pashhur there were Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

²³The Levites who had married foreign women were Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (whose other name was Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

²⁴There was Eliashib the musician. Among the temple guards there were Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

²⁵This is a list of the names of the other Israelites {who had married foreign wives}:

In the clan of Parosh there were Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malkijah, and Benaiah.

²⁶In the clan of Elam there were Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

²⁷In the clan of Zattu there were Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

²⁸In the clan of Bebai there were Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

²⁹In the clan of Bani there were Meshullam, Malluk, Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal Jeremoth.

³⁰In the clan of Pahath-Moab there were Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

³¹In the clan of Harim there were Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, ³²Benjamin, Malluk, and Shemariah.

³³In the clan of Hashum there were Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

³⁴In the clan of Bani there were Maadai, Amram, Uel, ³⁵Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi, ³⁶Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

³⁸In the clan of Binnui there were Shimei, ³⁹Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, ⁴⁰Maknadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴²Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

⁴³In the clan of Nebo there were Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. ⁴⁴All of those men had married women who were not Israelites. Some of those women had borne children{, so when the men sent the women away, they also sent their children with them}.

Nehemiah

Chapter 1

¹I am Nehemiah, son of Hakaliah. {I am writing this account.}

My story begins in the month of Kislev during the twentieth year of the reign of King Artaxerxes {over the Persian Empire}. I was in the capital city of Susa. ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came to see me, along with some other people from the province of Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and remained in Judah {many years earlier} when soldiers had forced many Jews to go {to Babylon}. I also asked about {the condition of} the city of Jerusalem.

³They said to me, "The Jews who escaped the exile and remained in the province of Judah are in a desperate situation. {The Babylonian soldiers} broke down the wall of Jerusalem {to get into the city}, and {they} burned down all of its gates. The people {living there} are defenseless."

⁴When I heard about these things, I sat down and cried. I could not stop mourning for days. I went without food, and I prayed to the God who is in heaven.

⁵I said, "O Yahweh, you are the God who is in heaven. You are the great and awesome God. You always keep your promises faithfully to those who love you and obey your commandments. ⁶Now please pay careful attention and listen to my prayer that I am praying to you now, as I have been constantly, for the people of Israel, your chosen people. I must confess the sins that we, the people of Israel, have committed against you. Both I and my family have also sinned. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. {Many years ago} you gave us your Law through your servant Moses. But we have not obeyed your Law.

⁸Please call to mind the promise that you made to your servant Moses. You told him, 'If you Israelites do not obey my commandments, I will take you from your land and make you live among the other nations. ⁹But if you become loyal to me again and start obeying my commandments once more, then I will bring you back to {your homeland of Judah}. That is the place {from} which I chose to start making myself famous throughout the world. I will do this no matter how far you have been taken away.'

¹⁰We are your chosen people, whom you rescued {from slavery in Egypt}. {You did that easily because} you are so very powerful. ¹¹O my Lord, please pay careful attention to my prayer and to the prayers of {my fellow Israelites}. We are eager to honor you. Please grant that the king {will agree to the request that I hope to make soon}." At that time, I was {an important official who served the wine at} the king's {table}.

Chapter 2

¹I prayed like this for four months. Then one day in the month of Nisan, still in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, something happened. {When it was time to serve} the wine, I took some and gave it to the king. I had never before looked sad in his presence.

²{No one was supposed to look unhappy in the king's presence. But the king noticed that I did look sad.} So he asked me, "Why are you sad? I can tell that you are not sick. You must be unhappy about something." This made me very afraid.

³I replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I hope you will live {a very long time}! {I am sorry, but I cannot help being sad.} I am sad because the city of Jerusalem, the place where my ancestors are buried, lies in ruins. {Our enemies} have burned down its gates."

⁴The king replied to me, "What do you want {me to do for you}?" {Before I answered him}, I prayed to the God who is in heaven.

⁵Then I replied to the king, "If it seems like a good {idea} to you, and if you are pleased with me, then {please} allow me to go to Judah, to Jerusalem. {I would like} to {help my people} rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

⁶{I was able to speak freely because this was a private meal,} with the queen sitting next to the king. The king asked me, "How long would you be away?" I told him how long I would be gone. That was acceptable to him, and he gave me permission to go. So I told him what day {I wanted to leave}.

⁷I also said to the king, "If it seems like a good {idea} to you, {please} give me letters {that I can show} to the governors of {the province} Beyond the River. In these letters, {please tell them} to give me {safe} passage through their province to Judah. ⁸{Please} also {write} a letter {for me} to Asaph, the man who takes care of your royal forest {in that area}. {Please tell} him to give me timber to make the beams to support the gates of the fortress that is near the temple. {Please} also {tell him to give me timber} for the city wall and for the house that I will live in."

God was with me and helping me, and so the king agreed to {all of} my {requests}.

⁹{When I left to travel to Judah,} the king sent along some army officers and soldiers riding on horses {to protect me}. When I reached {the province} Beyond the River, I went {to see} its governors. I showed them the letters the king had given me, {and they gave me safe passage}.

¹⁰{One of the people I showed my letters to was} Sanballat the Horonite. {He was the governor of Samaria, the area right next to Judah.} He and his deputy, Tobiah the Ammonite, became very upset when they learned that someone had come to help the people of Israel. {They did not want to see Judah become strong again, because that would be a threat to Samaria.} ¹¹But I made it {safely} to Jerusalem {despite their opposition}. I stayed there for three days,

¹²I did not say {publicly} what God was leading me to do for Jerusalem. Instead, I got up {secretly} in the night {to inspect the city walls}. I brought {only} a few other men with me. {So that we could work quietly,} the only animal I brought with me was the one that I was riding.

¹³That night we went out through the Valley Gate and went past the Dragon Well to the Rubbish Gate. We made a careful inspection of the walls of Jerusalem. We {noted where our enemies} had broken down the walls, and {where} they had burned up the wooden gates. ¹⁴Then we came to the Fountain Gate and the Royal Pool. {The opening there was so narrow that} the animal I was riding could not get through. ¹⁵So we followed {the path of} the {Kidron} Brook, {even though} it was night. {From there} we were able to look {up} at the wall {and see its condition}. {This route} brought us back {to where we started}. We re-entered {the city} through the Valley Gate, and I went back {home without being seen}.

¹⁶The city officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing. To that point I had not said {anything about it} to the Jewish leaders, the priests, the leading citizens, or the city officials. {I had not approached} anyone {about} doing the work {of rebuilding the walls}.

¹⁷{But} now I said to them, "You see what a desperate situation we are in. You see that Jerusalem lies in ruins, and {our enemies} have burned down its gates. {We need to} do something {about this!} {I challenge all of you to} join me in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Then we will not have to feel ashamed any more." ¹⁸Then I told them how God had been with me and had been helping me. I also told them how the king had given me permission to come.

{When they heard this,} they said, "Let's get going and start building!" They encouraged one another {and committed themselves} to the project.

¹⁹Then Sanballat the Horonite, his deputy Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard {that we had started to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem}. They ridiculed us mercilessly. They said, "What you are doing is not going to amount to anything! {But} you should not be rebelling against the king {like that}!"

²⁰But I answered them {firmly}. I said, “The God who is in heaven is the one who will enable us to complete this project. We are his chosen people. We are going to start rebuilding. But you have absolutely nothing to do with what happens in Jerusalem.”

Chapter 3

¹{These are the names of the people who helped to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.} Eliashib the Supreme Priest and his fellow priests began by rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They dedicated this gate {to God, as a symbolic way of dedicating the entire wall.} Then they set the doors of the Sheep Gate in place. They rebuilt the wall as far as the Tower of 100 Soldiers and {beyond that} to the Tower of Hananel. Then they dedicated that part of the wall {to God} as well.

²Next to them, people from Jericho rebuilt {part of the wall}.

Next to them, Zaccur, the son of Imri, rebuilt {part of the wall}.

³The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate. They framed it with {wooden} beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}.

⁴Next to them, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired {part of the wall}.

Next to him, Meshullam, the son of Berekiah and grandson of Meshezabel, repaired {part of the wall}.

Next to him, Zadok the son of Baana repaired {part of the wall}.

⁵Next to him, some people from Tekoa repaired {part of the wall}. But the leading citizens of Tekoa were too proud to do the work that the leaders {of Judah had asked them to do}.

⁶Joiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah, repaired the Old Gate. They framed it with {wooden} beams, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}.

⁷Next to them, Melatiah from {the city of} Gibeon, Jadon from {the town of} Meronoth, and other men from Gibeon and from the {city of} Mizpah repaired {part of the wall}. They repaired it as far as the residence of the governor of {the province} Beyond the River.

⁸Next to them, Uzziel the son of Harhaiah repaired {part of the wall}. He was one of the goldsmiths, {the workers who made jewelry and other objects from gold}.

Next to him, Hananiah repaired {part of the wall}. He was one of the workers who made perfumes. They rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

⁹Next to them, Rephaiah the son of Hur repaired {part of the wall}. Rephaiah ruled half of the district of Jerusalem.

¹⁰Next to him, Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired {the part of the wall} near his house.

Next to him, Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired {part of the wall}.

¹¹Malkijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section {of the wall}, along with the Tower of the Ovens.

¹²Next to them, Shallum the son of Hallohesh repaired {part of the wall}. Shallum ruled the {other} half of the district of Jerusalem. His daughters worked with him on the repairs.

¹³Hanun and some people from {the city of} Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt the gate, they set its doors in place, and they installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}. They also repaired 1500 feet of the wall, as far as the Rubbish Gate.

¹⁴Malkijah, the son of Rechab, repaired the Rubbish Gate. Malkijah ruled the district of Beth-Hakkerem. He rebuilt the gate, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}.

¹⁵Shallun the son of Kol-Hozeh repaired the Fountain Gate. Shallun ruled the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt the gate and put a roof over it, he set its doors in place, and he installed bolts and bars {for locking the gate}. Near the Pool of Siloam he also repaired the wall next to the royal garden, as far as the steps that went down from the City of David.

¹⁶Next to him, Nehemiah the son of Azbuk repaired {the wall} as far as the place opposite the tombs in {the City of} David, to the reservoir that the people had made and the army barracks. Nehemiah ruled half of the district of Beth-Zur.

¹⁷Next to him, some Levites repaired {parts of the wall}. One of them was Rehum the son of Bani. Next to them, Hashabiah, who ruled half of the district of Keilah, repaired {a section of the wall} on behalf of the people of his district.

¹⁸{Some other Levites} repaired the next {section of the wall}. Next to them, Binnui the son of Henadad, who ruled the other half of the district of Keilah, repaired {more of the wall}.

¹⁹Next to him, Ezer the son of Jeshua repaired another section {of the wall}. Ezer ruled the {city of} Mizpah. {He started} from a place in front of the steps that went up to the building for storing weapons, {and he finished} at the place where the wall bends slightly.

²⁰Next to him, Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section with great enthusiasm, from the bend in the wall as far as the door of the house of Eliashib the Supreme Priest.

²¹Next to him, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of that house.

²²Next to him, some priests from the area around {Jerusalem} repaired {a section of the wall}.

²³Next to them, Benjamin and Hasshub repaired {a section} opposite their house.

Azariah, the son of Maaseiah and grandson of Ananiah, repaired the next {section}, beside his house.

²⁴Next to him, Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the bend in the wall as far as the bulwark. ²⁵{Next to him,} Palal the son of Uzai {repaired a section}. He began at the place opposite the bend in the wall {where} the watchtower is taller than the upper palace that King {Solomon built}. That is near the courtyard where the guards live. Next to him, Pedaiah the son of Parosh {repaired a section}.

²⁶The temple servants who lived on Ophel {Hill} {repaired the wall} as far as the eastern side of the Water Gate, {where there is} a tall tower.

²⁷Next to them, the people from Tekoa repaired another section, from opposite the very tall watchtower as far as the wall at Ophel {Hill}.

²⁸A group of priests repaired {the wall} starting at the Horse Gate. Each one repaired {the section} in front of his own house.

²⁹Next to them, Zadok the son of Immer repaired {the section} in front of his house.

Then Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, repaired the next {section}.

³⁰Next to him, Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section.

Next to them, Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired {the section} opposite the rooms {where} he {lived}.

³¹Malkijah, who was {another} one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next {section}, as far as the building used by the temple servants and the merchants. That building was opposite the Appointment Gate. He {rebuilt the wall} as far as the upper apartments {of this building}, which were on the corner.

³²Some of the {other} goldsmiths, along with some merchants, repaired {the last section of the wall} from the corner apartments to the Sheep Gate.

Chapter 4

¹When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the {city} wall, he became furious, and he mocked the Jews.

²He spoke to the {other provincial} officials and army officers. He said, "These weak Jews will not be able to accomplish anything! They will never restore {the city! Their God} will not help them. They do not realize what a long time it would take to repair {that wall. The only way} they can get stones {is} by pulling them out of rubbish heaps. And {the Babylonians} burned {the city, so those} stones are probably weak {anyway}."

³Tobiah the Ammonite was standing beside Sanballat. He made fun of the Jews by saying, "Right! The wall that they are building {is so weak} that if a fox walked across the top {of it}, it would fall down!"

⁴{When I heard about what they were saying, I prayed to God and said,} "O our God, listen {to the way} they are mocking us! Make {them fail in their attempts to stop us,} so that {other} people will mock them! Allow their enemies to capture them and force them to go to a foreign land! ⁵{They are guilty, and they have sinned against you.} Do not take away their guilt, and do not ignore their sin! {I am asking this} because they are also causing others to be angry at the people who are rebuilding the wall!"

⁶But we kept building the wall, {and after some time,} we finished the wall around the whole city to about half the necessary height. Everyone was determined to accomplish this.

⁷But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the men from {the land of} Arabia, the men from {the nation of} Ammon, and the men from {the city of} Ashdod heard that we were continuing to repair the wall of Jerusalem and to fill in the gaps, they became furious. ⁸All of them together made a plan to come and fight against the people of Jerusalem. They wanted to make the people inside the city confused {and divided}. ⁹But we prayed to our God {to protect us}, and we stationed lookouts {on the walls} at all times to watch out for them.

¹⁰Then the people of Judah started saying, "The people who are carrying {the stones} are getting worn out. There is too much rubbish. We are not going to be able to {finish} rebuilding the wall."

¹¹Then our enemies {started} saying, "Before {the Jews} know we are coming, we will rush {down} on them and kill them and stop their work {on the wall}!"

¹²And when some of the Jews who lived near {our enemies} came {to Jerusalem}, they pleaded with us repeatedly, "Let {our men} return {home so} they {can defend} us!"

¹³But I put {guards} behind the wall at the places where it was low or where there were gaps. I also had people from each family group stand {guard} with their swords, spears, and bows and arrows. ¹⁴After I had inspected {everything}, I summoned the leading citizens and the city officials and many of the other people, and I said to them, "Do not be afraid of our enemies! The Lord is great and awesome, {so} think about {what he can do}. And fight to {protect} your families, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes!"

¹⁵When our enemies learned that we had found out about {their plan}, they realized that God had kept them {from launching a surprise attack}. {They decided not to attack us.} So we all went back to {working on} the wall. Each person continued doing {the same} work {as before}. ¹⁶But after that, {only} half of my servants worked {on the wall}. The other half of them {stood guard} armed with spears, shields, bows and arrows, and metal armor. Officers {stood} behind the workers and guards {to encourage everyone and to give orders in case there was an attack}.

¹⁷Those who were building the wall and those who carried the heavy loads {always} had their weapons with them {so that they would be prepared to fight off an attack}. ¹⁸Each builder worked with his sword strapped to his side. {I stationed} someone next to me who would blow a ram's horn {if we needed a signal}.

¹⁹Then I said to the leading citizens, the city officials, and many of the other people, "We are working over a very wide area, and we are far apart from each other along the wall. ²⁰But wherever you hear {the man} sounding the ram's horn, gather around us at that place. Our God will fight for us!"

²¹So we continued to work {on rebuilding the wall}. Half of the men {served as guards} and kept their weapons ready at {all} times. ²²At that time, I also said to the people, "Each {worker} and his servant must spend the night inside Jerusalem {and not go home if they live outside the city}. {That way} the city will have plenty of defenders {even} at night, and they can {still} work {on the wall} during the daytime." ²³{During that time} none of us took off our clothes. I did not, and my brothers, my servants, and my personal bodyguard did not. Each of us {always had} our weapons {with us}, {even when we were washing ourselves}.

Chapter 5

¹{Around this same time,} many of the men and their wives complained bitterly about what their fellow Jews were doing to them.

²Some of them began, "We have many children. We need to get {a lot of} food to feed them {all}."

³Others added, "We have had to promise to give someone our fields, vineyards, and houses if we do not pay back the money {he} has loaned us. We had {to borrow the money} to buy food during this time when food is scarce."

⁴Still others said, "We have had to borrow money to {pay} the taxes that the king {commanded us to pay} on our fields and our vineyards. ⁵{This is how bad things have gotten.} We are selling our children into slavery. In fact, we have even sold some of our daughters. Our creditors took the fields and vineyards {we pledged as security for loans}, so there was nothing {else} we could do. But we are Jews, just like the people who are doing these things to us!"

⁶I got very angry when I heard these things that they were complaining about. ⁷I thought hard about what to do. Then I brought charges against the leading citizens and the city officials. I called together a large group of people {to hear} the charges against them. I told these leaders, "You are charging interest {on loans} to your fellow Jews. {You know that is forbidden in the Law of Moses}."

⁸I said to them, "Whenever our fellow Jews have had to sell themselves into slavery to people from {other} nations, to {the best of} our ability we have been buying them back. But you are actually selling your fellow Jews into slavery to get back the money they owe you. These are some of the very people we have been buying back!" They knew that these charges were true, so there was absolutely nothing they could say in response.

⁹Then I said to them, "What you are doing is wrong! You certainly ought to obey God and do what is right!

Otherwise, our enemies will mock us even more. ¹⁰I myself, my relatives, and my servants have been lending money and grain {to anyone in need without charging interest}. All of us should stop charging interest on loans.

¹¹Give them back their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses. Do it right away! And pay back the 12% annual {interest you have been collecting} on the money, grain, wine, and olive oil that you have lent them."

¹²These leaders replied, "Yes, we will do what you say. We will give back {their fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses}. And we will stop {charging} them {interest}."

Then I called the priests, and I made the leaders swear {to God in front of them} that they would do what they had promised. ¹³I also shook out the folds of my robe and said to them, "In this same way, may God fling anyone who does not keep this oath away from everything he owns. Yes, may that person lose everything!"

Then everyone who was there said, "We agree!" And they praised Yahweh. After that none of the Jews took houses or fields to guarantee loans, and none of them charged interest any more.

¹⁴Here is something else I did to help the people. Artaxerxes, the king {of Persia}, had appointed me to be the governor of {the province of} Judah during the twentieth year {of his reign}. During the twelve years from the time that he appointed me until the thirty-second year of his reign, I did not accept the governor's food allowance, and {I did not use it to feed} my relatives. {I knew that the people were poor and could not afford to pay for it.} ¹⁵The governors before me had made life very difficult for the people. They had demanded that the people supply them with bread and wine and forty silver shekels every day. Even their servants oppressed the people. But I respected and honored God, and so I did not oppress them. ¹⁶I devoted myself to the work of {rebuilding} the wall. {My relatives and I} did not buy any property, {even though we could have gotten it cheaply because the poor were so desperate}. I also assigned all of my servants to work {on the wall}.

¹⁷{As governor,} I {was responsible for} feeding 150 Jewish leaders and city officials. I also entertained {Jewish} visitors who came from nearby countries. ¹⁸Each day {I told my servants} to prepare {for us} one ox, six good sheep, and various kinds of poultry. I paid for these myself. Every ten days I also brought in an abundant supply of various kinds of wine. But {I knew that} the people were struggling to survive, and so {I paid for all of these things at my own expense}. I did not accept the governor's food allowance.

¹⁹My God, think of me, and reward me for all the good that I have done for the people of Judah.

Chapter 6

¹Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arabian, and our other enemies learned that we had finished rebuilding the wall, and that there were now no more gaps in it. (However, we had not yet put the doors in the gates.) ²So Sanballat and Geshem sent me {a message that} said, "We want to arrange to meet with you in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." But {I knew that they were saying this because} they wanted to harm me.

³So I sent messengers to tell them, "The work I am doing {here} is very important. I am not able to travel {while it is going on}. There is no reason for me to stop the work and leave it so that I can meet with you."

⁴They sent me the same message four times, and {each time} I refused them for this same reason.

⁵Then Sanballat sent one of his servants to me bringing the same request for a fifth time. This time the message was written, but it was not sealed. Sanballat {left the letter unsealed so that others would find out what it said, because he wanted to pressure me to meet with him}. ⁶The letter said, "{The people in} the countries {around us} are saying, and Geshem confirms {that it is true}, that you and the Jewish people are planning to rebel {against King Artaxerxes}. That is why you are rebuilding the wall. {They are also} saying that you intend to become the king of the Jews yourself. ⁷{These people are} also {saying that} you have appointed prophets to make a proclamation about you in Jerusalem. They are saying, 'The Jews {now} have a king {of their own}!' King Artaxerxes will certainly hear these reports, {and when he does, he will be very angry with you}. So we really should meet together and talk {about this}."

⁸I sent {a message} back to him saying, "None of these things that you are saying are true. You are just making them up yourself."

⁹I knew that they were all {just trying to} frighten us. They thought, "{The Jews will become so afraid that} they will stop working {on the wall}, and they will never finish {rebuilding it}." So {I prayed, "O God,} give me courage.{"}"

¹⁰{Around this time} I went to visit Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel. {I went to see him in his home, because} he was not leaving {his house}. He was a priest, and he was trying to show that it was not safe for Jewish leaders to go out in public. He told me, "{We are not safe even here.} We need to go into the temple and lock the doors, because people are trying to kill you. One night they are going to come and kill you."

¹¹I responded, "I am not the kind of man who would run away! Besides, I am the governor, {and everyone knows me,} so I could not save my life by {trying to} hide in the temple. I refuse to do it!"

¹²All of a sudden I realized that God had not given Shemaiah a prophetic message for me. Instead, he was saying these things because Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him {to say them}. ¹³{They} had paid him the money specifically to {say things that} would scare me. They were hoping they could make me sin {by abandoning my responsibilities and hiding in the temple}. {If I had done that,} they would have ruined my reputation and discredited me.

¹⁴{So I prayed,} "My God, treat Tobiah and Sanballat the way they deserve for what they have done. Do the same for the female prophet Noadiah and all the other prophets who are {trying to} make me afraid."

¹⁵We finished {rebuilding} the wall on the twenty-fifth {day} of the month of Elul, after {working on it} for 52 days.

¹⁶When all of our enemies learned that we had completed the rebuilding in such a short time, they realized that our God must have helped {us}. This made the people in the countries around us lose all of their confidence.

¹⁷During this time, the leading citizens of Judah were writing many letters to Tobiah {to give him information about me}, and he was sending letters back to them {with instructions}. ¹⁸Tobiah was married to the daughter of {a powerful and influential member of the community,} Shecaniah the son of Arah. His son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of {another powerful and influential man,} Meshullam the son of Berechiah. And so, for those reasons, many people in Judah had sworn oaths to {be loyal to} Tobiah. ¹⁹{The people who were loyal to Tobiah} would also {come and} tell me what good things he was doing, and then they would report to him everything I said {in response}. Tobiah also sent me many letters to try to make me afraid.

Chapter 7

¹Once we had finished rebuilding the wall and we had put the doors in the gates, we assigned the gatekeepers and singers and Levites to their tasks. ²I appointed two men to {help me} govern Jerusalem, my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress {in Jerusalem}. I appointed Hananiah because he was trustworthy, and because he showed God more reverence and respect than most people do.

³I told them, "Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until broad daylight. {That way we will be able to see anything our enemies are doing.} Have the gatekeepers close {the gates} and put the bars across the doors while they are still guarding {the gates before they go home for the night}." I also told them, "Have the men who live in Jerusalem take turns keeping watch in their own neighborhoods."

⁴The city of Jerusalem covered a large area, but {at that time} not many people lived in the city, and they had not yet built houses {for themselves}. ⁵So {as a first step towards filling Jerusalem with people again}, God led me to gather together the leading citizens and the city officials and the other people {living in the city} to register them according to their family histories. I also found a book containing the records of the first group of people who had returned {to Jerusalem} from the exile. This is what those records said.

⁶"These are {the names of} the people from Judah who returned home from exile. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had taken {their ancestors} away {to Babylon}. But they returned to Jerusalem and to {other places in} Judah. They returned to the {same} towns where their {ancestors had lived}.

⁷The people who came back were following Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

{This is a list of} the number of men from {each} Israelite {clan who returned}:

⁸2172 men from {the clan of} Parosh;

⁹372 men from {the clan of} Shephatiah;

- ¹⁰652 men from {the clan of} Arah;
- ¹¹2818 men from {the clan of} Pahath-Moab, who are descendants of Jeshua and Joab;
- ¹²1254 men from {the clan of} Elam;
- ¹³845 men from {the clan of} Zattu;
- ¹⁴760 men from {the clan of} Zakkai;
- ¹⁵648 men from {the clan of} Binnui;
- ¹⁶628 men from {the clan of} Bebai;
- ¹⁷2322 men from {the clan of} Azgad;
- ¹⁸667 men from {the clan of} Adonikam;
- ¹⁹2067 men from {the clan of} Bigvai;
- ²⁰655 men from {the clan of} Adin;
- ²¹98 men from {the clan of} Ater who were descendants of Hezekiah;
- ²²328 men from {the clan of} Hashum;
- ²³324 men from {the clan of} Bezai;
- ²⁴112 men from {the clan of} Hariph;
- ²⁵95 men from {the clan of} Gibeon.
- ²⁶{Some other} men {also returned, whose ancestors had lived in these towns}:
- 188 men from Bethlehem and Netophah;
- ²⁷128 men from Anathoth;
- ²⁸42 men from Beth-Azmaveth;
- ²⁹743 men from Kiriath-Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth;
- ³⁰621 men from Ramah and Geba;
- ³¹122 men from Michmas;
- ³²123 men from Bethel and Ai;
- ³³52 men from a {small town} called Nebo;
- ³⁴1254 men from a {small town} called Elam;
- ³⁵320 men from Harim;
- ³⁶345 men from Jericho;
- ³⁷721 men from Lod, Hadid, and Ono;
- ³⁸3930 men from Senaah.

³⁹These priests also returned:

973 men from {the clan of} Jedaiah who are descendants of Jeshua;

⁴⁰1052 men from {the clan of} Immer;

⁴¹1247 men from {the clan of} Pashhur;

⁴²1017 men from {the clan of} Harim.

⁴³These Levites also returned:

74 men from the clan of Jeshua and {the clan of} Kadmiel, all of them descendants of Hodevah.

⁴⁴148 members of the {sacred} choir {also returned}. All of them were from the clan of Asaph.

⁴⁵138 {temple} gatekeepers {also returned}. They were from the clan of Shallum, the clan of Ater, the clan of Talmon, the clan of Akkub, the clan of Hatita, and the clan of Shobai.

⁴⁶Some temple workers also returned. They were from the clan of Ziha, the clan of Hasupha, the clan of Tabbaoth, ⁴⁷the clan of Keros, the clan of Sia, the clan of Padon, ⁴⁸the clan of Lebanah, the clan of Hagabah, the clan of Shalmi, ⁴⁹the clan of Hanan, the clan of Giddel, the clan of Gahar, ⁵⁰the clan of Reaiah, the clan of Rezin, the clan of Nekoda, ⁵¹the clan of Gazzam, the clan of Uzza, the clan of Paseah, ⁵²the clan of Besai, the clan of Meunim, the clan of Nephushesim, ⁵³the clan of Bakbuk, the clan of Hakupha, the clan of Harhur, ⁵⁴the clan of Bazlith, the clan of Mehida, the clan of Harsha, ⁵⁵the clan of Barkos, the clan of Sisera, the clan of Temah, ⁵⁶the clan of Nezhiah, and the clan of Hatipha.

⁵⁷Some descendants of the laborers that King Solomon {first conscripted also returned}.

These were from the clan of Sotai, the clan of Sophereth, the clan of Perida, ⁵⁸the clan of Jaalah, the clan of Darkon, the clan of Giddel, ⁵⁹the clan of Shephatiah, the clan of Hattil, the clan of Pochereth-Hazzebaim, and the clan of Amon. ⁶⁰Altogether, there were 392 descendants of the {temple} workers and {conscripted} laborers {who returned}.

⁶¹Another group also returned {that came from the towns of} Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Kerub, Addon, and Immer {in Babylonia}. But they could not prove that they were descendants of Israelites.

⁶²These 642 men were from the clan of Delaiah, the clan of Tobiah, and the clan of Nekoda.

⁶³Some priests {also returned who were} from the clan of Hobaiah, the clan of Hakkoz, and the clan of Barzillai. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of a man named Barzillai from the region of Gilead. He had taken the family name of his wife. ⁶⁴These {priests} searched the records that contained the names of the Israelite ancestors, but they could not find the names of their families. {They did not qualify to be priests because they could not trace their family history,} so they were not allowed to have {the rights and duties of} priests. ⁶⁵The governor told them that they must not eat any of the share of food taken from the sacrifices and kept for the priests. They would have to wait until the priest {in charge of the temple} had begun his duties and could ask {God} what to do {about this situation}. ⁶⁶Altogether, 42360 people {returned to Judea}.

⁶⁷There were also 7337 male servants and female servants, and 245 male singers and female singers.

⁶⁸{The Israelites also brought back from Babylonia} 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁹435 camels, and 6720 donkeys.

⁷⁰Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans gave {gifts} for the work {of rebuilding the temple}.

The governor gave into the treasury more than 8 kilograms of gold, 50 bowls {to be used in the temple}, and 530 robes for the priests.

⁷¹Some of the leaders of the ancestral clans also gave into the {temple} treasury for the work {of rebuilding the temple a total of} 153 kilograms of gold, and 1460 kilograms of silver.

⁷²And the remainder of the people gave {a total of} 153 kilograms of gold, 1330 kilograms of silver, and 67 robes for the priests.” ⁷³So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the {temple} workers, and many ordinary people {started to} live in the {towns and} cities {of Judea where} their {ancestors had lived}. All these people were Israelites. By the seventh month {all of} the Israelites had gone to their cities and had started living in them.

Chapter 8

¹A huge crowd of people gathered together in the plaza that was near the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the scroll of the law that Moses {had written down}, and which Yahweh had given to the people of Israel {for them to obey its rules and commands}. ²Ezra the priest, {who served God by offering sacrifices in the temple,} brought out the law {and presented it} before all the people, to both men and women, and {children} who were old enough to understand what he read. He did this on the first day of the seventh month {of that year}. ³So he read aloud from the book in the plaza that was near the Water Gate throughout the whole morning. He read it in front of all the people, both men and women and {children} who {were old enough} to understand what he read. And all the people listened carefully to the laws that were written {on the scroll}. ⁴Ezra the scribe stood on top of a {high} wooden platform that the people had built for this purpose. At his right side stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. At his left side stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. ⁵Ezra {stood on the platform} above all the people so that everyone could see him. He opened the scroll, and as he did that all the people stood up.

⁶Then Ezra praised Yahweh, the great God, and all the people lifted up their hands {to show that they were praying with him}. {At the end of his prayer} they said, “We agree!” Then they all bowed down with their faces touching the ground, and they worshiped Yahweh. ⁷Then Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, who were all Levites, explained the meaning of the laws {of Moses} to the people who were standing there. ⁸They read clearly from the scroll of the law of God, and they explained what it meant, so that the people understood what {Ezra and the others} were reading.

⁹Then the people began to cry from sadness when they heard what the law said. So Nehemiah (who was the governor), Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining the meaning to the people, said to all the people, “Today is a festival day on which you are supposed to worship Yahweh your God. Do not mourn or cry!”

¹⁰Then Nehemiah said to them, “{Now} go home, eat some good food, and drink something sweet. And share some of it with those who are not able to afford {rich food and drink}, because today is a holy day set apart {to worship} our Lord. So do not grieve, because the joy that Yahweh gives will strengthen you.”

¹¹The Levites also told the people {who were crying} to stop, saying, “Today is a holy day! So, shhh. Do not grieve.”

¹²So all the people went {home} to eat and drink and share what they had. And they were very happy, because they understood {the meaning of} the words that {Ezra had read and} the others had explained to them.

¹³On the next day, the clan leaders of all the people and the priests and the Levites met together with Ezra the scribe. They wanted {to study} carefully what was written in the law {that Yahweh had given to Moses}. They wanted to understand it {better}. ¹⁴They learned that the law said that Yahweh had told Moses to command the Israelite people to live in shelters during a festival in the seventh month. {This was so that they would remember that their ancestors had lived in shelters when they walked in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.} ¹⁵{They} also {learned} that they should publicly proclaim, in all their towns and in Jerusalem, that the people should go into the hills and cut branches. These should be from olive trees, wild olive trees, myrtle trees, palm trees, and shade trees. They must bring these branches and make shelters {to live in during the festival}. That was what the scroll instructed.

¹⁶So the people went out {of the towns and cut branches} and brought {them} to make shelters for themselves. They built shelters on the {flat} roofs {of their houses}, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of the temple, in the plaza near the Water Gate, and in the plaza near the Ephraim Gate. ¹⁷All of the Israelite people who had returned from Babylon built shelters and lived in them {for one week}. Now the Israelite people had never celebrated {that festival} like this since Joshua the son of Nun {led them into this territory}. This was the {first} time they were doing it. And the people were very happy. ¹⁸Every day during that week {Ezra} read aloud {to the people} from the scroll of the law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days. On the eighth day, they called for all the people to come together {so they could hold a ceremony to bring the festival to an end}. That was what the scroll instructed.

Chapter 9

¹Two days later, the Israelite people gathered together again. {To show that they were sorry for their sins,} they went without food, they wore {clothes made from} rough cloth, and they put dirt on their {heads}. ²The descendants of Israel separated themselves away from all the descendants of foreigners. They stood there and confessed their own sins and the wicked things their ancestors had done. ³They stood in place and {listened to someone} read from the scroll of the law of Yahweh their God for three hours. Then for another three hours they confessed their sins and bowed down and worshiped Yahweh their God.

⁴{Some of} the Levites stood up on the stairs, including Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, another {man} named Bani, and Kenani. And they cried out {sorrowfully} in a loud voice to Yahweh their God.

⁵Then some Levites spoke. They were named Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah.

They said, "Stand up and praise Yahweh your God, who has always {lived} and will {live} forever! Yahweh, we praise your glorious name! Your name is more important than everything else that is good and wonderful! ⁶You are Yahweh, and no one else. You made the heavens that are above everything, and all that lives in the heavens {above the earth}. You made the earth and everything that is on it, and you made the seas and everything that is in them. You are the one who causes all living things to be alive. Everything that {lives} in the heavens {above the earth} worships you.

⁷You are Yahweh! You are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of {the city of} Ur, where the Chaldean people {lived}. You changed his name to Abraham. ⁸You saw that he was faithful to you in his inner being. You made a promise to him {pledged with blood}, promising that you would give a land {to him} and to his descendants. This was the land where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites {lived}. And you did what you promised, because you {always} do what is right.

⁹You saw how {the Egyptians} mistreated our ancestors in Egypt. You heard them cry out {to you for help} when they were beside the Red Sea. ¹⁰You knew that {the leaders of Egypt} were treating {our ancestors} very arrogantly. So you performed miracles for Pharaoh and his officials and all the people of Egypt. {These proved you are the true God.} You made yourself famous, and you are still famous! ¹¹You divided the sea in front of {your people Israel}, and they {walked} through the middle of the sea on dry land. But you drowned {the soldiers of the Egyptian army} under the waters. They sank as a stone sinks in deep water! ¹²During the day you led {your people} by a cloud {that looked like a huge} pillar. At night you led them by a fire {that looked like a huge} pillar. It shone on the path in front of them to show them where they should walk. ¹³When {our ancestors} were at Sinai Mountain, you appeared to them and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them honest instructions and trustworthy laws. You gave them good rules and commands. ¹⁴You taught them about your Sabbath {day of rest}. It is set apart {from the other days of the week}. You gave commands and rules and laws for the people by your servant Moses. ¹⁵When they were hungry, you gave them bread from heaven. When they were thirsty, you gave them water from a rock. You told them to go and take the land {of Canaan}, which you had promised with a vow to give them.

¹⁶But our ancestors were proud and stubborn. They refused to obey what you commanded them {to do}. ¹⁷They refused to obey you. They did not consider all the miracles that you had performed for them. They became stubborn and rebelled against you. They appointed a leader to take {them} back {to Egypt}, where they would be

slaves {again}! But you are a God who forgives us. You act kindly and mercifully {toward us}. You do not become angry quickly. Instead, you faithfully love {us} very much. So you did not leave {our ancestors} alone {in the desert}.

¹⁸Indeed {you did not leave them alone}, even though they made an idol for themselves {that resembled} a calf. They said {about the idol}, 'This is our god, who brought us up out of Egypt.' By doing that they insulted you greatly. ¹⁹But because you always act mercifully, you did not leave them alone in the desert. During the daytime, the cloud {that looked like a huge} pillar above them continued to lead them in the way {you wanted them to go}. And during the night, the fire {that looked like a huge} pillar shone on the path in front of them to show them where to walk. ²⁰You gave them your good Spirit to instruct them. You continued to give them manna when they were hungry, and you gave them water when they were thirsty. ²¹For forty years you took care of them in the desert. During all that time, they had everything they needed. Their clothes did not wear out. Their feet did not swell up, {even though they were continually walking}. ²²You helped {our ancestors} to defeat {the armies of great} kings {who ruled} many people. {By doing that,} you allowed {our ancestors} to settle in every part {of this land}. They took over the land that King Sihon ruled from {the city of} Heshbon and the land that King Og ruled in the Bashan {area}. ²³You gave so many children to {our ancestors} that they were like the stars {in the sky}. You brought them into this land, which you had told their parents to enter and take for themselves {so that they could live there}.

²⁴Their children went in and took the land. You enabled them to defeat the people who were living there. They were {the descendants of} Canaan. You enabled them to conquer their kings and all the people who {lived} there. They were able to do whatever they wanted to those people. ²⁵{Our ancestors} captured cities that had walls around them. They took possession of fertile fields. They took possession of houses that were already full of all kinds of good things, and wells that someone had already dug. They took possession of many vineyards and groves of olive trees and fruit trees. They ate all that they wanted and became fat. They enjoyed {all} the many good things you did {for them}.

²⁶But they turned against you. They rejected your law. They killed the prophets who warned them that they should return to {obeying} you. They {said and} did very evil things {against you}. ²⁷So you allowed their enemies to defeat them. But when their enemies caused them to suffer, they called out to you. You heard them from heaven, and because you are very merciful, you sent them people to help them. Those {leaders} rescued them from their enemies.

²⁸But when there was {a time of} peace {again}, {our ancestors} again did evil things that you {hated}. So you allowed their enemies to conquer {them} and rule over them. But {whenever} they returned to you and cried out to you again {to help them}, you heard them from heaven. You rescued them many times, because you {always} act mercifully. ²⁹You warned them that they should return to {obeying} your laws {again}. But they became proud {and stubborn}. They would not listen to your commands. They sinned by disobeying your decrees, even though a person lives by obeying them. They purposely ignored what you commanded them to do. They became stubborn and refused to obey.

³⁰You were patient with them for a long time. You warned them by {the messages} your Spirit gave to your prophets. But they did not listen {to those messages}. So again you allowed {the armies} of the nations nearby to defeat them. ³¹But because you act very mercifully, you did not destroy them completely. You never left them alone. Yes, you are a very gracious and merciful God!

³²Our God, you are great and mighty and awesome! You {always} fulfill {your} promises and {always} faithfully love {us}! So now {we are praying}: Do not ignore all our difficulties. Consider all the troubles that our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all of your people have experienced. We have been experiencing these troubles since {the armies of} the kings of Assyria {conquered us} until now. We are still experiencing them today. ³³{We know that} you have acted fairly in {letting} all these things happen to us. Yes, you have treated {us} as {we} deserve. But we have done evil things. ³⁴{In the past,} our kings, our leaders, our priests and our {other} ancestors did not obey your laws. They did not listen to your commands or the warnings that you gave them. ³⁵They had their own kings. They {enjoyed} the many good things that you provided in this large and fertile land that you gave them. But {even then,} they did not serve you. They would not stop doing evil things.

³⁶Consider our situation! Today we {live like} slaves here in this land that you gave to our ancestors. You gave them this land so that they could enjoy all the good things that grow here. But consider us now! We are {like} slaves on this land. ³⁷The kings whom you have allowed to rule over us are enjoying {all} the good things that grow here. This is because we have sinned. They rule over our bodies and our cattle. They do whatever they please. We feel great distress. ³⁸Because of all this, we {the Israelite people} are making a solemn agreement. We are writing it on a scroll. We will write down {the names of} our leaders, our Levites, and our priests. Then we will seal the scroll."

Chapter 10

¹These are {the names of} the people who signed the agreement:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hakaliah; Zedekiah the scribe.

²{The priests who signed the agreement included:}

Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, ³Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah, ⁴Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk, ⁵Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, ⁶Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, ⁷Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, ⁸Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. Those are {the names of} the priests {who signed the agreement}.

⁹The Levites {who signed the agreement} were:

Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui from the clan of Henadad, Kadmiel,

¹⁰{Some of} their associates also {signed the agreement, including}: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

¹¹Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah, ¹²Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, ¹³Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

¹⁴The Israelite leaders {who signed the agreement} were:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, and Bani, ¹⁵Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, ¹⁶Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, ¹⁷Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, ¹⁸Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, ¹⁹Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, ²⁰Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, ²¹Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, ²²Pelathiah, Hanan, Anaiah, ²³Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, ²⁴Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, ²⁵Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, ²⁶also Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, ²⁷Malluk, Harim, and Baanah.

²⁸The rest of the people {joined in this solemn agreement. This included} the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, and the {temple} workers. {It also included} everyone who agreed only to worship and obey the God of Israel, along with their wives and their sons and daughters who were {old enough} to understand what they were {doing}. ²⁹They {all} joined with their leaders, who were important people, and together they all made a solemn agreement to obey {all} the laws that God had given by Moses his servant. They agreed that they would strictly obey everything that Yahweh our God had commanded, yes, {all of} his instructions. ³⁰This is what {they promised to do}: "We will not give our daughters {in marriage} to people {who live} in this land {who do not worship Yahweh}. We will not allow our sons to marry their daughters. ³¹People from other groups {who live} in this land might bring merchandise and all kinds of food to sell on Sabbath days. But we will not buy anything from them on a Sabbath {day} or any other sacred day. Every seventh year, we will let {the fields} rest {and not plant any crops. That same year} we will not make anyone pay back {anything they owe} to another person. ³²We each also agreed to a pledge that {every} year we would pay 4 grams of silver for the {supplies} needed for the temple. ³³{Here is a list of those supplies.} The {sacred} bread that is placed {before God}. The grain that is {burned on the altar} each day. {The animals that} are completely burned up {on the altar} each day. The sacred offerings for the Sabbath days and for celebrating each new moon and other {festivals} that {God} told {us to celebrate}. {Other} offerings that are dedicated {to God}. {The animals} to be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the Israelite people. Anything else {that is needed} for the work of {taking care of} the temple.

³⁴We have cast lots to determine when each clan of the priests, the Levites, and {the rest of} the people will bring an offering of wood to the temple. Each clan will do this at an appointed time every year. {The Levites will use} the

wood to burn {the sacrifices} on the altar that belongs to Yahweh our God. He commanded this in the law {he gave through Moses}. ³⁵We will also bring {an offering} to the temple every year from the first {grain} that we {harvest} and from all the first fruit that {grows on} all our trees. ³⁶We will also do something else that God commanded. We will bring our firstborn sons to the temple {for dedication}, and our firstborn calves and lambs and goats {as sacrifices}, to the priests who minister in the temple. ³⁷We will also bring supplies to the priests that {they} can store in the temple. These will include the first grain that we {harvest}, the first flour we {make}, the first fruit from all {our} trees, and the first wine and olive oil {that we produce}. We will also bring 10 percent of our harvest to the Levites. We will allow them to collect this 10 percent right in all the towns where we work. ³⁸A priest, one of the descendants of Aaron, will be with the Levites {and supervise} them when they collect that 10 percent. Then the Levites must bring 10 percent of what they have received to the temple. {The priests will put it} in the storerooms and it will support {them}. ³⁹That is how it will work. The Israelites and the Levites will bring their offerings of grain, wine, and olive oil to those storerooms. That is where {the priests} will store the equipment for the temple. And that is where {they will keep the food supplies} for the priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers who are serving at that time.

We promise that we will keep taking care of the temple.”

Chapter 11

¹So the {Israelite} leaders settled in Jerusalem {with their families}. The rest of the people cast lots to select one family out of ten to live in Jerusalem. That was the city set apart {for God}. The remaining nine families lived in the {other} towns. ²The people {asked God to} bless all those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

³These are {the names of} the provincial officials who settled in Jerusalem. But in the towns of Judah, everyone lived on his own family property in their towns. This included the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of the servants of Solomon. ⁴But some of the people of Judah and some of the people of Benjamin stayed and lived in Jerusalem.

Here are {the names of} the leaders who lived in Jerusalem.

From the descendants of Judah, one of them was Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez.

⁵Another one was Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Kol-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, who was one of the descendants of Shelah. ⁶Altogether 468 men who were descendants of Perez lived in {the city of} Jerusalem. These men were {very} brave and skilled in combat.

⁷These are the descendants of Benjamin {who decided to live in Jerusalem}.

One of them was Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah.

⁸Two men who assisted him were Gabbai and Sallai. Altogether 928 people {from the tribe of Benjamin settled in Jerusalem}. ⁹Their leader was Joel the son of Zichri. Judah the son of Hassenuah was {the official who was} second in command in Jerusalem.

¹⁰The priests {who settled in Jerusalem} included Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin. ¹¹Another priest was Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub. He was in charge of the temple. ¹²Another 822 of their associates {settled in Jerusalem and} performed work for the temple. Another priest {who settled in Jerusalem} was Adaiah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah. ¹³Another 242 of his associates, including the leaders of their ancestral clans, {settled in Jerusalem}. {Another priest who settled there} was Amashsai the son of

Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer. ¹⁴Another 128 of their associates who were strong men {settled in Jerusalem}. Their leader was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim.

¹⁵One of the Levites {who settled in Jerusalem} was Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni. ¹⁶Two others were Shabbethai and Jozabad, who supervised the work outside the temple and were leaders of the Levites. ¹⁷Another Levite {who settled in Jerusalem} was Mattaniah, who directed the temple choir when they sang the prayers to thank God. He was the son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph. His assistant choir director was Bakbukiah. Another Levite was Abda, the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. ¹⁸Altogether, 284 Levites settled in {Jerusalem}, the city set apart {for God}.

¹⁹The gatekeepers {who settled in Jerusalem} included Akkub, Talmon, and 172 of their associates who kept watch at the gates.

²⁰The rest of the Israelite people, including the priests and the Levites, all lived on their own property in all the other towns in Judea. ²¹The {temple} workers lived on Ophel {Hill in Jerusalem}; and Ziha and Gishpa supervised them.

²²The man who supervised the Levites who lived in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi was one of the descendants of Asaph. These were the singers responsible for the music in the temple {services}. ²³Now the king {of Persia} had said {that his kingdom would provide support} for the singers. The king had said to give them whatever they needed to maintain the singing in the temple services. ²⁴Pethahiah was the {ambassador} to the king {of Persia} for any matter pertaining to the {Israelites}. He was the son of Meshezabel, who was one of the descendants of Zerach, the son of Judah.

²⁵Some of the descendants of Judah did not settle in Jerusalem. They lived in {towns and} villages near their farms. These included {the city of} Kiriath-Arba and its neighboring villages, {the city of} Dibon and its neighboring villages, and {the town of} Jekabzeel and its neighboring villages. ²⁶{Some descendants of Judah} also {lived} in {the town of} Jeshua, {the town of} Moladah, {the town of} Beth-Pelet, ²⁷{the town of} Hazar-Shual, and {the city of} Beersheba and its neighboring villages. ²⁸{Some} also {lived} in {the town of} Ziklag, {the town of} Mekonah and its neighboring villages, ²⁹{the town of} En-Rimmon, {the town of} Zora, {the town of} Jarmuth, ³⁰{the towns of} Zanoah and Adullam and the nearby villages, {the city of} Lachish and the nearby farms, and {the town of} Azekah and the nearby villages.

{All of} those people settled {in the territory of Judah, in the area} between Beersheba {in the south} and the Valley of Hinnom {in the north}. ³¹Some people who were descendants of Benjamin {settled in these cities and towns}: Geba, Michmas, Aija, Bethel and its neighboring villages, ³²Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, ³³Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, ³⁴Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, ³⁵Lod, and Ono the Valley of Craftsmen. ³⁶Some Levites who had previously lived in {the territory of} Judah {went and settled} in {the land that had belonged to the old tribe of} Benjamin.

Chapter 12

¹These are {the names of} the priests and Levites who returned {from Babylonia} with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and with Joshua {the Supreme Priest}. The priests included Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ²Amariah, Malluk, Hattush, ³Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, ⁴Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, ⁵Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, ⁶Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah.

All those men were leaders of the priests, their associates, during the time when Joshua {was the Supreme Priest}.

⁸The Levites {who returned} included Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah. Mattaniah and his associates led {the people in singing songs} to thank {God}. ⁹Their associates Bakbukiah and Unni {stood} opposite them during the worship services {and led a choir that sang responses}. ¹⁰Joshua {the Supreme Priest} was the

father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of Eliashib. Eliashib was the father of Joiada. ¹¹Joiada was the father of Jonathan. Jonathan was the father of Jaddua.

¹²When Joiakim was {the Supreme Priest}, these priests were the leaders of their clans. Meraiah was the leader of the clan of Seraiah. Hananiah was the leader of the clan of Jeremiah. ¹³Meshullam was {the leader of the clan} of Ezra.

Jehohanan was {the leader of the clan} of Amariah.

¹⁴Jonathan was {the leader of the clan} of Malluchi. Joseph was {the leader of the clan} of Shecaniah. ¹⁵Adna was {the leader of the clan} of Harim. Helkai was {the leader of the clan} of Meraioth. ¹⁶Zechariah was {the leader of the clan} of Iddo. Meshullam was {the leader of the clan} of Ginnethon. ¹⁷Zichri was {the leader of the clan} of Abijah. Piltai was {the leader of the clan} of Miniamin and {the clan} of Moadiah. ¹⁸Shammua was {the leader of the clan} of Bilgah. Jehonathan was {the leader of the clan} of Shemaiah. ¹⁹Mattenai was {the leader of the clan} of Joiarib. Uzzi was {the leader of the clan} of Jedaiah. ²⁰Kallai was the {leader of the clan} of Sallai.

Eber was {the leader of the clan} of Amok.

²¹Hashabiah was {the leader of the clan} of Hilkiah. Nethanel was {the leader of the clan} of Jedaiah.

²²{Some scribes} wrote down {the names of} the clan leaders of the Levites during the time when Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were {Supreme Priests}. They wrote down {the names of} the clan leaders of the priests when Darius was king of Persia.

²³{Scribes} recorded {the names of} the clan leaders of the Levites in their record books up until the time when Johanan the descendant of Eliashib was {the Supreme Priest}. ²⁴Hashabiah, Serebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel were Levite leaders {who directed one choir}. Their associates {stood} opposite them {directing another choir}. The singers praised {God} and gave thanks {to him}, with one group facing the other. This was what King David, the man who served God faithfully, had instructed. ²⁵Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers. They {stood} guard at the storerooms near the gates. ²⁶They did that {work} during the time when Joiakim, the son of Jeshua and grandson of Jozadak, was {the Supreme Priest}. They did it {again} during the time when Nehemiah {served} as governor and Ezra {served} as priest and scribe.

²⁷When {we} dedicated the wall around Jerusalem, we summoned the Levites from all the places {where} they were {living}. We brought them to Jerusalem to assist in dedicating the wall by rejoicing and giving thanks and by singing {accompanied by} cymbals and harps and other stringed instruments. ²⁸We summoned the Levites who {were used to} singing {together}. They came to Jerusalem from nearby areas where they had settled around the city. They also came from places around {the village of} Netophah {southeast of Jerusalem}. ²⁹They also came from {three places northeast of} Jerusalem, Beth-Gilgal and the areas around Geba and Azmaveth. {We summoned} those singers because they had built villages to live in near Jerusalem. ³⁰The priests and Levites performed rituals to make themselves acceptable {to God}. Then they performed {similar} rituals to purify the other people, the gates, and the wall. ³¹Then I gathered the leaders of Judah together on top of the wall. I assigned them {to lead} two large groups that would march {around the city} on top of the wall, thanking {God}. {As they faced the city, one group} walked to the right toward the Rubbish Gate. ³²Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah marched behind that group. ³³{The people who marched with that group} included Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah. ³⁵Some descendants of the priests {also marched with that group} playing musical instruments. They included Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph. ³⁶Some associates {of Zechariah} also {marched and played musical instruments}. They included Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They all were playing {the same kinds of} musical instruments that King David, the man who served God faithfully, {had told the Levite musicians to play many years previously}. Ezra the scribe {marched} in front of this group. ³⁷When the people in this group reached the Fountain Gate, they went up the steps that were in front of them to {the area known as} the City of David. Then they went along the top of the wall past the location of the {royal} palace of

David, and then to the Water Gate, on the east {side of the temple}. ³⁸The other group of those who were {singing and} thanking {Yahweh} marched to the left on top of the wall. I followed them with half of the people. We marched past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall. ³⁹From there {we marched} past the Ephraim Gate, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred Soldiers to the Sheep Gate. We finished marching near a gate that {leads into the temple area}. ⁴⁰Both of the groups {reached} the temple {as they were singing and} giving thanks. They stood {in their places there}. I was there with the half of the city officials who had come with me. ⁴¹{My group} included the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah. All of them were blowing trumpets. ⁴²{Others who were blowing trumpets} included Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang with Jezrahiah who was their leader. ⁴³The people offered many sacrifices that day. They {all} rejoiced because God had made them very happy. The women and the children rejoiced along with the men, so the sound of the celebration in Jerusalem was so loud that people far away could hear it.

⁴⁴On that day {we} appointed men to be in charge of the storerooms. That was where {the priests} kept the money and the food and the grain and the tithes. {The people} brought these things from the fields near the cities into the storerooms for the priests and the Levites, as Moses had commanded in the law. {The people of} Judah did all this because they were so happy about the priests and the Levites serving {in the temple}. ⁴⁵The priests and the Levites served God by performing rituals to purify things. The singers and the gatekeepers also {did their work} as King David and his son Solomon had declared they should. ⁴⁶{We did all this} because that was how it was in the days of old, when David was {king} and Asaph was {in charge of the temple musicians}. There was someone to lead the singers, and they sang songs to praise and thank God. ⁴⁷During the time when Zerubbabel was {the governor}, the people all contributed the food that the singers and temple gatekeepers needed each day. They did the same during the time when Nehemiah was {the governor}. They gave a tenth {of their crops} to the Levites, and the Levites gave a tenth {of that} to the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, {the first Supreme Priest}.

Chapter 13

¹Then someone read out loud to the people from a scroll {that contained the law that God gave to} Moses. They learned that the {law} said that no one from the Ammonite or Moabite {people groups} should ever join the {Israelite} people {when they gathered together to worship God}. ²{The law said this} because {the people of Ammon and the people of Moab} did not give any food or water to the Israelites {while they were traveling through their areas after leaving Egypt}. Instead, they paid Balaam to get him to curse the Israelites. But our God turned that attempt to curse Israel into a blessing. ³So the people obeyed that law. They sent away all the people whose ancestors had come from other countries.

⁴When he became the {Supreme} Priest, Eliashib got control of the storerooms in the temple. Now he was related to Tobiah. ⁵He allowed {Tobiah} to have a large room in which the priests used to store supplies. These included the grain offerings and the incense, the equipment for the temple, and the tithes of grain and wine and olive oil. {God} had commanded {the people to bring} these to the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers. This room had also held the offerings for the priests. ⁶During that time I was not in Jerusalem, because in the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was the king of Babylonia, I had gone back {to report to the king what I had been doing}. After I had been there a while, I asked the king to allow me to return {to Jerusalem}.

⁷When I arrived in Jerusalem, I discovered the evil thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by allowing him to use this room in the temple area. ⁸That grieved me very much. I threw everything that belonged to Tobiah out of that room. ⁹Then I commanded {the priests to perform a ritual to cleanse} that room and make it pure again. I also {ordered} the equipment for the temple and the grain offerings and incense {to be} put back in that room {where they belonged}.

¹⁰I also learned that the singers and the other Levites who were responsible for the {temple} services had left Jerusalem. They had returned to their own fields because the people had stopped giving them {10 percent of their} harvests, {since Tobiah had occupied the storeroom}. ¹¹So I rebuked the city officials. I told them, "You have

neglected {the work of} the temple!" Then I brought {the Levites and the singers} back to the temple and told them to do their work {again}. ¹²Then all {the people of} Judah started bringing their tithes of grain, wine, and olive oil to the {temple} storerooms {once again}. ¹³I appointed some {men} to be in charge of the storerooms. They were Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah the Levite. I also appointed Hanan the son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah to assist them. I appointed these {men} because {everyone} knew that they were trustworthy and would distribute {the offerings fairly} to their associates.

¹⁴"My God, please bless me for this. Yes, bless me for the good things that I have done for your temple and for the temple services!"

¹⁵During that time, I saw {some people} in Judea {who were working} on the Sabbath day. Some were pressing grapes to make wine. Others were taking their grain and loading it on donkeys. Others were also loading {bags of} wine, baskets of grapes, figs, and many other things onto donkeys and bringing them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. I warned them not to sell {food to the people of Judea} on {Sabbath} days. ¹⁶I also saw some people from {the city of} Tyre who were living there in {Jerusalem} bringing fish and other things into Jerusalem to sell to the people of Judah on the Sabbath day. ¹⁷So I rebuked the Jewish leading citizens. I said to them, "This is a very evil thing that you are doing! You are making the Sabbath day into something {God never wanted} it to be. ¹⁸You know that your ancestors did these same things, and God {punished} our nation {by} bringing great trouble to this city! But {now} you too are breaking {the laws} for the Sabbath day. You are going to cause {God} to be angry with {the nation of} Israel {again}. {He will punish us} even more!"

¹⁹So I commanded {the gatekeepers} to shut the doors of the gates of the city when it started to get dark on Friday evening. I commanded them not to open the gates until Saturday evening. I also stationed some of my men at the gates {so they would make sure that} no one brought things to sell into {the city in between those times}, on the Sabbath day. ²⁰One or two times traders and merchants selling all kinds of things camped outside the city on the night {before the Sabbath day}. {They were hoping} to sell {something the next day}. ²¹I warned them. I said to them, "It is useless for you to camp here outside the walls on Friday night. If you do this again, I will arrest you by force!" After that, they did not come on Sabbath days.

²²I also commanded the Levites to {perform a ritual to} purify themselves and then {take up stations} to guard the city gates. I wanted them to ensure that Sabbath days were kept holy {by not allowing merchants to enter the city on that holy day}.

"My God, please bless me for doing this too! And be kind to me, because your kindness is so great."

²³During that time, I also learned that many of the Jewish men had married women from {the city of} Ashdod, and from the Ammonite and Moabite {people groups}. ²⁴So half of their children spoke a foreign language, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew. They spoke whatever language {their} foreign {parent spoke}. ²⁵So I rebuked those men. I {asked God} to curse them. I struck some of them {with my fists}. I pulled out their hair. Then I forced them to make a solemn promise, knowing that God was listening. I made them promise that they would {never} again allow their daughters to marry foreign men. I also made them promise that they and their sons would not marry foreign women. ²⁶{I said to them,} "You know that Solomon, the king of Israel, sinned as a result of {marrying foreign women who worshiped idols}! You know that he was greater than any of the kings of other nations. God loved him, and God set him as the king over all {the people of} Israel. But his foreign wives caused even him to sin! ²⁷{I am grieved} to hear this about you! You have married foreign wives {who worship idols}. You have committed a great sin against our God!"

²⁸A man who was a son of Joiada and a grandson of Eliashib the Supreme Priest had married the daughter of {our enemy} Sanballat the Horonite. So I forced this man to leave {Jerusalem}.

²⁹"My God, these {men} have brought shame to the priesthood. {They have broken} the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. Punish them as they deserve!"

³⁰I took away everything from {the priests} that came from other nations and religions. I also established regulations for the priests and for the Levites {so they would know} what work each of them was supposed to do.

³¹*[I]* also *[arranged]* for the people to bring their offerings of wood at the set times *[to burn on the altar]*, and to bring the first part of what they harvested *[of each crop during the year]*.

"My God, please consider that I *[have done all these things]*, and bless me *[for doing them]*."

Esther

Chapter 1

¹This {is the story of something that} happened during the time that {a king named} Ahasuerus ruled {the land of Persia}. The empire of this King Ahasuerus had 127 provinces and included all of the territory between India {in the east} and Ethiopia {in the west}. ²At that time King Ahasuerus was ruling his empire from Susa, the capital city {of Persia}. ³During the third year that Ahasuerus ruled his empire, he hosted a feast for all of his officials and for every important person who worked for him. He also invited the officers who served in the {combined} army of {the kingdoms of} Persia and Media, the wealthy landowners, and the officials of the provinces. The king was present in person {to host the feast}. ⁴Ahasuerus entertained his guests fabulously because he wanted to demonstrate that his empire was extremely wealthy and that he was a very rich and powerful king. {The feast lasted} for six months.

⁵At the end of those six months, {after that feast was over,} the king hosted a {second} feast. This feast was for all of the people in the royal stronghold in Susa, including both rich and poor. He held this feast in the courtyard of his palace garden. It lasted for a whole week. ⁶{In the courtyard,} white and blue curtains were hanging from white and purple cords attached to silver rings on marble pillars. The guests reclined on couches made of gold and silver. These were set on a mosaic floor that was made of red marble, white marble, and pearl bordered with black marble. ⁷The attendants served wine in golden cups. {The king was so rich that he had a great many of these cups,} and no two of them were alike. The king had the attendants serve great amounts of his own royal wine to the guests. ⁸Ahasuerus gave his guests a special privilege. He made the attendants who served the wine follow this rule: "No one has to drink if they do not want to." All the guests could drink as little or as much as they wanted. ⁹{While the king was entertaining the men in the courtyard,} Queen Vashti, {his wife,} was hosting a feast for the women. She hosted it inside the royal palace where King Ahasuerus lived.

¹⁰On the seventh day, when King Ahasuerus was feeling good from drinking wine, he called the seven {castrated} guardians who served him personally. (Their names were Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Karkas.) ¹¹Queen Vashti was a very beautiful woman. Ahasuerus wanted the people and officials who served in the royal court to see how beautiful she was. So the king told his seven personal servants to bring Queen Vashti to him. He told them to have her wear her royal crown. ¹²But when the guardians came and told Queen Vashti what the king had commanded, she refused to come. {The guardians reported this to the king, and} the king became very enraged. ¹³It was the habit of the king to consult with certain advisors who knew the law and could make good decisions. So he spoke to those advisors, who knew the right way to do things. ¹⁴The king's closest advisors were Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukan. These seven officials were from various places in {the kingdoms of} Persia and Media. They advised the king personally. They were the most powerful officials in the empire. ¹⁵The king said to them, "I sent those guardians to Queen Vashti with a command, but she did not obey me. According to the law, what should we do with her?"

¹⁶Then Memukan answered the king, {speaking loud enough that} both he and his officials could hear. He said, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, and not only against the king. She has also done wrong against all the officials and people groups in all the provinces that King Ahasuerus rules! ¹⁷This is what will happen. Women all over the empire will hear about what the queen did. They will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded his servants to bring Queen Vashti to him, but she did not come! {So if even the queen can disobey the king, why should I have to obey my husband?}' Then women will stop respecting their husbands. ¹⁸Even today, the leading women of Persia and Media will hear what the queen did. They will start to disobey {their husbands, even though they are} officials of the king. They will treat them with disrespect, and this will make their husbands angry with them. That will be bad enough by itself, {even if the news does not spread any farther}. ¹⁹If it pleases you {to do so}, O king, you should personally issue a royal decree and have scribes add it to the laws of Persia and Media, which no one can change. {This decree should

say} that Vashti can never come into your presence again. Then you should choose a different woman to be your queen, one who will obey you. ²⁰That way, even though your empire is very large, everyone in it will hear about your decree {and know that if any wife disobeys her husband, he can banish and divorce her just as you did to Vashti.} Then all the women will respect and obey their husbands. This will be true of every husband in the empire.”

²¹This seemed like a good idea to the king and his officials. So King Ahasuerus followed the advice of Memukan.

²²The king sent letters to every province in his empire. He wrote to every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. The letters said that men should be the masters over their wives and children. They also said that a husband should be able to give orders to his wife in his own native language {and that she should understand and obey}.

Chapter 2

¹Some time later, when King Ahasuerus no longer felt so angry, he started to miss Vashti. But when she disobeyed his command, he had made a decree that she could never come into his presence again. ²So some of the young men who attended the king said to him, “{Your majesty, you should get a new wife} for yourself. You could tell your servants to look for young virgins who are very beautiful. ³Also, you could assign officers in each province of your empire to bring every virgin who is very beautiful here to your capital city of Susa. They could stay in the harem for virgins under the custody of Hegai, the {castrated} royal guardian who takes care of the young women who live there. He could arrange for them to receive beauty treatments. ⁴Then you could decide which young woman you liked the best, and you could make her queen instead of Vashti.” The king liked what they suggested, so he did it.

⁵At that time, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai living in the capital city of Susa. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. His father was named Jair, his grandfather was named Shimei, and his great-grandfather was named Kish. ⁶Many years earlier, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had taken Kish away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon along with many other captives. Nebuchadnezzar took them away from Jerusalem at the same time that he took King Jeconiah of Judah away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon. ⁷Now Mordecai was taking care of his cousin, who was an orphan. Her {Hebrew} name was Hadassah, and her {Persian} name was Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. Esther was now a young woman, and she was exceptionally attractive.

⁸And so this is what happened: Messengers went {throughout the empire} and proclaimed the new law that the king had spoken. At the same time, the officers {whom the king had appointed in each province} brought many {beautiful} young women to the capital city of Susa and put them under the custody of Hegai. He was the man who took care of the young women {who lived in the harem for virgins}. {Because Esther was exceptionally attractive,} the officers also brought her to the king's palace and put her under the custody of Hegai. ⁹Hegai was very impressed with Esther, and he treated her favorably. He quickly arranged for Esther to receive her beauty treatments and her allotment of food. He also chose seven female servants from the king's palace and assigned them to be her personal attendants. He also moved Esther and her attendants to the best rooms in the harem for virgins. ¹⁰Mordecai had warned Esther that she should not tell anyone what people group she was from. So she did not tell anyone that she was a Jew or who her relatives were. ¹¹Mordecai wanted to know how Esther was doing and what was happening to her. So each and every day, he would walk around in front of the courtyard of the harem for virgins. That way he could ask people who were going in and out of the harem how she was doing.

¹²Each young woman in the harem, one at a time, was going to {have sexual relations with} King Ahasuerus {and become one of his concubines}. But before her turn came, each woman received a full year of beauty treatments, using techniques that had been developed for women {in Persia}. This is how the beauty treatments were completed: For the first six months, {a woman's attendants would rub her body every day} with olive oil mixed with myrrh. For the next six months, {her attendants would rub her body every day} with perfumes and lotions designed for women. ¹³This is the way that they would prepare a young woman to go {and have sexual relations} with the king {and become one of his concubines}. She could take whatever clothing and jewelry she wanted from the harem for virgins and wear them when she went to the king's palace. ¹⁴The king's servants would bring her {to the king's private rooms} in the evening. The next morning, they would bring her to the other harem, the one for

concubines. There a man named Shaashgaz would take charge of her, because he was the {castrated} royal guardian who took care of the concubines. {The young woman would live there for the rest of her life.} She would not go and see the king again unless he asked for her by name because he had enjoyed being with her.

¹⁵Eventually, {the evening came when} it was the turn for Esther, whom Mordecai had adopted as his daughter, to go to the king. She was the daughter of Abihail, Mordecai's uncle. When Esther went to the king, she only asked for what Hegai, the royal guardian in charge of the harem for virgins, recommended that she should wear. Everyone who saw Esther was very impressed with her. ¹⁶The king's servants brought Esther to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace during the tenth month of the year (the month of Tebeth), in the seventh year of his reign {as king of Persia}. ¹⁷The king loved Esther more than any of the other women. He treated her more kindly and more favorably than any of the other young women {who had become his concubines}. So King Ahasuerus put a royal crown on her head, and he made her the queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸Then the king hosted a great feast and invited all of his officials and servants. It was a feast to celebrate Esther {becoming the queen}. He proclaimed that this would be a time to celebrate for people in all of the provinces of his empire {when they would not have to pay taxes}, and he generously gave gifts {to people}.

¹⁹{Later,} Ahasuerus had his officers bring more virgins {to Susa}. During this time, Mordecai {was working for the king, and he} sat at the king's gate. ²⁰Esther had still not told anyone what people group she was from, because Mordecai had warned her not to tell anyone. In fact, she continued to follow all of Mordecai's instructions, just as she had done when she was growing up in his house. ²¹During that time, when Mordecai was {doing his work} at the king's gate, two of the king's guards who protected the doorway {to the king's private rooms} became angry {with the king}. They planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Their names were Bigthan and Teresh. ²²But Mordecai found out about what they were planning. He told Queen Esther about it, and she told the king. She explained that Mordecai had given her the information. ²³So the king's officials investigated Mordecai's report and discovered that it was true. So the king ordered his servants to hang those two men from wooden poles {until they died}. In the king's presence, the king's scribes recorded an account of this in the royal chronicles.

Chapter 3

¹Some time later, King Ahasuerus promoted {one of his officials,} Haman, the son of Hammedatha, who was a descendant of Agag. The king gave Haman a very important position, more important than any of his other officials. ²The king {wanted to show that he had given Haman an important position. So he} commanded all of his other servants who were at the king's gate to bow down all the way to the ground to honor Haman {whenever he walked by}. But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, {because as a Jew he would not worship anyone except Yahweh}. ³The other servants at the king's gate {saw that Mordecai refused to bow down, and they} asked him, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" ⁴Mordecai told them that he was a Jew, {and that Jews only worship Yahweh}. The other servants warned Mordecai every day {that he would be punished severely if he kept disobeying the king and not honoring his most important official}. But Mordecai still refused to bow down. So they told Haman about it to see if he would allow Mordecai to keep refusing to bow down {because he was a Jew}. ⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down to him, he became furious. ⁶The other servants told Haman that {Mordecai was not bowing down to him because} Mordecai was a Jew. So Haman decided it would not be enough just to kill Mordecai alone. Haman decided that he would try to kill all the Jews in the entire empire of Ahasuerus.

⁷So Haman had his servants cast a Pur (that is, a lot) while he watched {to determine the best month and the best day of the month to kill the Jews}. They did that in the first month, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned {as king of Persia}. The lot selected the twelfth month of that year, the month of Adar, {as the time for Haman to carry out his plan}. ⁸Then Haman went to King Ahasuerus and said, "Your Majesty, there is a certain group of people who live among the other peoples in your empire. They are in every province. They have their own set of laws, and so they do not obey your laws. It is not good for you to allow them to live in your empire. ⁹If you approve of this plan, O king, then write a decree saying that all of the Jews must die. {When they are dead, we can take all of their goods, and from that} I will give 300 tons of silver to your administrators for them to put into your royal treasuries." ¹⁰The king {liked what Haman said. So he} gave Haman the ring that he wore that had

his official seal on it. {With that, Haman could make laws as if he were the king himself.} Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, had become the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹The king told Haman, "You can keep the money for yourself, and you can do whatever you want to do with those people."

¹²On the thirteenth day of the first month of that same year, Haman called in the royal scribes, and he dictated a letter to them. He told them to send copies to the royal officials, the governors of each province, and the leaders of each people group. The scribes translated the letter so it could be sent to each province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. To show that he was sending the letter under the king's own authority, Haman sealed each copy of the letter with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. ¹³Couriers delivered the letters to the officials in every province in the empire. The letters said to completely destroy all the Jews, including the children and women, on a single day. That was to be the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, {in that same year}. The letters also said that those who killed the Jews could take everything that belonged to them. ¹⁴The letter told the officials to post copies where everyone could see them. That way all the people in every single province would know that the king had commanded this, and they would get ready {to do what the letter said to do} when the day came. ¹⁵As the king had commanded, couriers rushed {with the letters to every province in the empire}. A herald also proclaimed what the letter said in the capital city of Susa. The king and Haman relaxed and drank together. But everyone who lived in Susa was very upset {about what was going to happen}.

Chapter 4

¹When Mordecai found out about Haman's plan {to kill all the Jews, as signs of grief} he tore his clothes and put on rough sackcloth and threw ashes over himself. Then he started walking towards the city center, {towards the king's palace}, crying out in anguish. ²But no one who was wearing sackcloth was allowed inside the king's gate. So when Mordecai reached the gate, he had to stay just outside of it. ³In every province of the empire, the letter that said to destroy the Jews {was announced in public. When} the Jews {heard about it, they} mourned greatly. They went without food and wailed loudly. Many of them also put on sackcloth and threw ashes on themselves and lay on the ground. ⁴Esther's female attendants came with her guardians and told her {that Mordecai was sitting outside the gate wearing sackcloth. When she heard about this,} Queen Esther herself became very afraid. She sent Mordecai some good clothes to wear instead of the sackcloth, but he refused to put them on.

⁵The king had assigned some of the royal guardians to Esther personally. So Esther called for one of them, a man named Hathak. She told him to go out and speak with Mordecai and find out why he was so distressed {that he was sitting at the king's gate wearing sackcloth}. ⁶So Hathak went out to {speak with} Mordecai, who was in the plaza in front of the king's gate. ⁷Mordecai told Hathak everything that Haman was planning to do {to the Jews}. He even told him how much money Haman said the king would get for his treasuries {if the king commanded people} to kill all of the Jews. ⁸Mordecai also gave Hathak a copy of the letter that the heralds had read out loud in Susa and that said that people must kill all of the Jews. He told Hathak to show the letter to Esther so that she would know exactly what it said. He also told him to urge her to go to the king personally and to beg him desperately to save her people from destruction. ⁹So Hathak returned to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said.

¹⁰Then Esther told Hathak to go back to Mordecai with this message: ¹¹"There is a law {about going to the king} that applies to {everyone in the kingdom}, both men and women. If anyone goes into the inner courtyard of the palace, {where the king can see them}, and the king has not summoned them, that person will die. Only if the king holds out his golden scepter to them, then they will live. Everyone in the whole empire knows this law. {So I cannot go and speak to the king as you have requested.} The king has not called for me in over a month, {and if I go without being summoned, I could be put to death}." ¹²So {Hathak} went back to Mordecai and told him what Esther had said.

¹³Mordecai told {Hathak} to tell this to Esther: "Do not imagine that just because you live there in the king's palace that you will be safe when they kill all the other Jews. ¹⁴If you say nothing at all now, someone from some other place will rescue the Jews, but you and your relatives will not survive. Who knows, perhaps it was for just such a time as this that you became queen." ¹⁵{After Hathak told this to} Esther, she told him to go back to Mordecai and

say this to him: ¹⁶“Gather together all the Jews who live here in Susa and tell them to fast and pray for my sake. Tell them to not eat or drink anything for three days and three nights. My female attendants and I will also fast in the same way. At the end of the three days, I will go to {talk to} the king, even though doing that is against the law. I will do that even if it costs me my life.” ¹⁷So {after Hathach told this to} Mordecai, he went and did everything that Esther had told him to do.

Chapter 5

¹Three days later, Esther {and her servants prepared a grand banquet. Then she} put on her royal robes, and she {went and} stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, across from the king's house. He was in the royal palace, sitting on the royal throne and facing the entrance of the room. ²As soon as the king noticed Queen Esther standing there in the courtyard, he was very pleased to see her. So he held out his golden scepter to her, {to show that she could safely approach him}. So Esther came up {to the throne} and touched the top of the scepter.

³Then the king asked her, “Why have you come here, Queen Esther? What do you want? {Tell me, and} I will give you anything you ask for, no matter how great it is.” ⁴Esther replied, “If it pleases you, O king, please come with Haman today to the banquet that I have prepared for you.” ⁵The king said to his servants, “{Go and} get Haman and bring him quickly so that we can do what Esther has asked us to do!” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther {and her servants} had prepared {for them}.

⁶While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, “Now please tell me what you {really} want. I will give you anything {you ask for}, no matter how great it is. I truly mean what I am saying.” ⁷Esther answered, “This is what I {really} want: ⁸if you are pleased with me, and if you are pleased, O king, to give me what I want, please come with Haman to {another} banquet that I will prepare for you tomorrow. I will answer your question then.”

⁹Haman was feeling very happy as he left {the banquet that day}. But then he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. Mordecai did not stand up to show respect for Haman or tremble fearfully in front of him. This made Haman furious with Mordecai. ¹⁰But {even though} Haman {was so angry, he} kept himself from showing that he was angry. {Instead,} he went home and gathered together his friends with his wife Zeresh, ¹¹and he boasted to them about how rich he was and about how many sons he had. {He} also {boasted} about how the king had promoted him many times and given him a position above all of his other officials and administrators. ¹²Then Haman added, “And that is not all! I was the only one Queen Esther invited to come with the king to a banquet that she prepared {for us today}. And she has also invited only me {to attend another banquet} with the king tomorrow.” ¹³Then Haman said, “But I still cannot be happy as long as I keep seeing that Jew, Mordecai, sitting there at the king's gate {and refusing to honor me}.” ¹⁴So Haman's wife Zeresh and his friends who were there suggested, “Have your servants set up a pole 25 meters high. Then tomorrow morning speak to the king and tell him that you want to hang Mordecai on it. Then {once you have executed Mordecai,} you can go to the banquet with the king in a good mood.” Haman thought that this was a good plan, so he {told his servants to} set up the pole.

Chapter 6

¹That night the king was unable to sleep. So he told {the young men who attended him} to bring in the royal chronicles. One {of the young men got the chronicles and} began to read them out loud to the king. ²The chronicles said that Bigthan and Teresh, two of the royal guardians who protected the doorway {to the king's private quarters}, had planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. The chronicles also said that Mordecai {had discovered their plot and} had let the king know about it. {By doing that, Mordecai saved the king's life.}

³Then the king asked, “In what great way did I honor Mordecai for saving my life?” The young men who attended him replied, “No one did anything for him.” ⁴At that moment, Haman entered the outer courtyard of the king's house. He had come to tell the king that he wanted to hang Mordecai on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai.

The king {wanted to consult someone about the best way to honor Mordecai, so he} asked, "Who is out in the courtyard?" ⁵The young men replied, "O king, Haman is standing in the courtyard." The king said, "Bring him in."

⁶When Haman came in, the king asked him, "What should I do for the man whom I would really like to honor?" Haman thought to himself, "Certainly I am the person whom the king would like to honor more than anyone else!"

⁷Haman replied to the king, "If you really want to honor someone, ⁸tell your servants to bring one of your own royal robes that you have already worn yourself. Have them also bring a horse that you have already ridden yourself and put a royal crown on its head {to show that it belongs to you}. ⁹Then, {on your behalf,} have one of your most noble officials present the man with the robe and the horse. Have your servants clothe the man whom you really want to honor {with the robe}. Have them seat that man on the horse and then lead the horse through the public square of the city. Have them shout out {to everyone} in front of them, 'The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!'" ¹⁰The king {liked this plan, so he} replied to Haman, "Go quickly! Take the robe and the horse and do what you have just described for Mordecai the Jew. He {is one of my servants who} sits by the gate to the palace. Make sure that you do absolutely everything that you have said."

¹¹So Haman {did what the king commanded. He} got the robe and the horse. He put the robe on Mordecai, seated him on the horse, and then led the horse through the public square of the city. As he did, he shouted out to everyone in front of him, "The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!" ¹²Then Mordecai went back to {his place at} the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, covering {his} head {because he felt so} humiliated. ¹³Haman {gathered} all his friends {together once again. He} told them and his wife Zeresh everything that had happened to him {that day. Some of his friends were also} his advisors{, and they} and his wife Zeresh told him, "Mordecai has begun to defeat you. Since he is one of the Jewish people, you will not win against him. Instead, he will certainly defeat you." ¹⁴While they were still talking together, {some of} the royal guardians arrived to bring Haman quickly to the banquet that Esther {and her servants} had prepared.

Chapter 7

¹So the king and Haman went to the {second} banquet that Queen Esther {had arranged for them}. ²At that second banquet, while they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther again, "Now please tell me what you really want, Queen Esther. {Tell me,} and I will do it for you. {I will give you} anything you ask for, no matter how great it is."

³Then Queen Esther replied, "If you are pleased with me, O king, I hope you will be willing to do what I ask. Please allow me to live, and please save my people. That is what I am asking for. ⁴{I am appealing to you} because someone has turned my people and me over {to our enemies}, and they are going to destroy us completely. If someone had sold the men and {even} the women to be slaves, I would not have said anything about that to you, because that would not have been important enough to bother you, the king, with that."

⁵Then King Ahasuerus responded to Queen Esther, "Who has done this? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?" ⁶Esther responded, "The man who is our bitter enemy is this evil man Haman!" This made Haman terrified to be in the presence of the king and the queen. ⁷The king became so angry that he got up and left the banquet of wine. He went {outside} into the palace garden {to decide what to do}. But Haman stayed {inside} to beg Queen Esther to save his life because he recognized that the king wanted to execute him. ⁸{As he was pleading for his life,} Haman knelt down very close to Esther as she was {reclining} on a {banqueting} couch. When the king returned from the palace garden to the room where they had been drinking wine, {he saw this}. The king exclaimed, "He is even trying to rape the queen in my presence and in my own house!" As soon as the king said this, {some of his servants} covered Haman's face {as a sign that he would be executed}.

⁹Then Harbona, who was one of the guardians who served the king personally, said, "O king! Haman has also set up a pole twenty-five meters high at his house because he wants to hang Mordecai on it. But Mordecai saved your life." The king said, "Hang Haman on it!" ¹⁰So they hung Haman on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king stopped being so angry.

Chapter 8

¹That same day, King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther all the property that had belonged to Haman. He had been the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was {her cousin and that he had been like a father} to her. When he learned that, {the king summoned} Mordecai to come to him. ²{When the king sentenced Haman to death,} the king took back from Haman the ring that had the king's official seal on it {and the king was wearing it again.} The king now took the ring off and gave it to Mordecai, {to show that Mordecai would have the power to act with the king's authority.} Esther also put Mordecai in charge of all the property that had belonged to Haman.

³Then Esther came to speak to the king again. {To show him how desperately she was pleading,} Esther knelt down and put her face right on top of his feet. She cried as she begged him to stop the terrible plan of Haman the Agagite to destroy the Jews. ⁴The king held out his golden scepter toward Esther, so she got up {off the floor} and stood facing the king. ⁵Then Esther said, "Your majesty, if you think that it is the right thing to do, and if you are pleased with me, please write a new letter revoking the letters that Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, sent out. His letters said to destroy all the Jews everywhere in your empire. ⁶{I am asking this} because I cannot bear to see the terrible thing that is about to happen to my people. They are my kindred. I cannot bear to see people destroy them."

⁷King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "As you know, I have given to Esther all the property that belonged to Haman, and I had my servants hang Haman on a wooden pole because he wanted to kill all the Jews. ⁸{You also know that} no one can revoke a letter that has my name and my official seal on it, {such as the letter that Haman wrote}. So this is what you should do. Write {a new letter} to help the Jews, as you think best. {I give you permission to} put my name on it and to seal {the letter} with the ring that has my official seal on it."

⁹So the king sent for his scribes. {They came and} they wrote a letter saying everything that Mordecai told them {to write}. {They wrote this letter} on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan, {in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned as king of Persia}. The letter addressed the Jews {in the empire}, but they also sent {copies of the letter} to the royal officials, and to the governors and leaders in each province. The empire {of Ahasuerus} had 127 provinces, extending all the way from India {in the east} to Ethiopia {in the west}. The scribes wrote to {people in} every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. They wrote {especially} to the Jews, in their alphabet and in their own language. ¹⁰Mordecai signed {each copy of the letter} with the name of King Ahasuerus, and he sealed {each one} with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. Couriers on horseback delivered the letters. They rode fast horses that were only for the king's service. These horses were born in the king's own stables. ¹¹{Each copy of the letter said} that the king permits the Jews throughout the empire to join together and to fight to protect themselves. {The king's letter} also {permits them} to completely destroy any group of armed men from any people or province who would attack them. {The letter} also {permits them} to kill the women and children {of those who would attack them}, and to take the possessions of the people {whom they kill}. ¹²{The letter permitted all the Jews} in every province throughout the empire {to do this} on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, {in that same year}. ¹³{The letter told the officials} in every single province to display copies of the letter where everyone could see them so that people would know that the king had commanded this, and so that the Jews would be ready to fight back against their enemies when the day came. ¹⁴The king commanded the couriers to deliver the letters as quickly as possible. {He sent them out} on his own fast horses. The king's officials also proclaimed the new law {and displayed copies of the letter} in the capital city of Susa.

¹⁵The king gave Mordecai {special things to wear to show that he was now his most important official. He gave him} a blue and white royal garment, a large golden crown, and a purple robe made of fine linen. Mordecai put these on and left the palace. {When} the people of Susa {saw him, they} shouted joyfully. ¹⁶The Jews in Susa were very happy, and other people honored them. ¹⁷In every single province and in every single city, wherever {the couriers} brought the letter announcing the king's decree, the Jews rejoiced greatly and had big celebrations. Many people from other groups in the empire became very afraid of the Jews, so they became Jews themselves.

Chapter 9

¹On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month {of that year}, the month of Adar, it was time for everyone to do what the letters from the king said that he had decreed for them to do. The enemies of the Jews had expected to destroy the Jews on that day. But just the opposite happened. Instead, it was the Jews who destroyed their enemies.

²Throughout the empire, the Jews joined together in their cities to defend themselves against those who wanted to harm them. No one was able to fight back against them because everyone in the empire had become very afraid of them, {so no one helped anyone who attacked the Jews}. ³All the leaders in each province, the royal officials, the governors, and everyone who worked for the king helped the Jews because they had become very afraid of Mordecai. ⁴They were afraid of Mordecai because he was a very important royal official. Throughout the empire, everyone was hearing about how great he was because Mordecai kept becoming more and more powerful.

⁵{On the day when they were allowed to defend themselves}, the Jews took their weapons and fought against all of their enemies. The Jews destroyed them completely. They were able to do everything that they wanted to do against their enemies. ⁶In the capital city of Susa the Jews killed 500 men. ⁷{The Jews} also {killed the ten sons of Haman. The names of his sons were} Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. ¹⁰These were the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. The Jews killed them, but they did not take the things that belonged to them. ¹¹At the end of the day, someone came in and reported to the king how many people the Jews had killed in the capital city of Susa.

¹²So the king said to Queen Esther, "Here in the capital city of Susa the Jews have killed 500 men, including the ten sons of Haman. In the rest of my empire, they must have killed many more than that! So, what else do you want? Tell me, and I will do it for you. I will do whatever you ask, so please tell me what you want." ¹³Esther replied, "If it seems like a good plan to you, O king, then please allow the Jews who {live here} in Susa to do again tomorrow what you allowed them to do today. Also, command {your servants} to hang {the bodies of} Haman's ten sons on wooden poles." ¹⁴The king did as {Esther} asked. He issued a decree {allowing the Jews} in Susa {to fight against their enemies again the next day}, and {he ordered his servants} to hang {the bodies of} Haman's ten sons. ¹⁵And so on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, the Jews who {lived} in Susa joined together again and killed 300 {more} men in Susa. But {once again} they did not take the things that belonged to those men.

¹⁶The Jews who {lived} in the other parts of the empire, who had joined together to fight for their lives {on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar}, had defeated their enemies and killed 75,000 of them {on that day}. But they did not take the things that had belonged to their enemies. ¹⁷{After defeating their enemies} on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, they rested on the fourteenth day. They devoted the fourteenth day as a day to celebrate joyfully. ¹⁸But the Jews who {lived} in Susa joined together {to fight against their enemies} on both the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month {of Adar}. They rested on the fifteenth day. They devoted that day to celebrating joyfully. ¹⁹That is why the Jews who live in rural villages observe this holiday on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar {rather than on the fifteenth day}. They do this by celebrating joyfully and by giving gifts to one another.

²⁰Mordecai wrote down everything that had happened. Then he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the empire, everywhere that they lived. ²¹He established {a holiday on} the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar. He told the Jews to observe it every single year ²²because those were the days when the Jews rested and no longer had to fight their enemies. That was the month when everything had changed for them. They had been deeply distressed {because their enemies were going to destroy them}. But then they became very happy {after they were safe from all their enemies}. {So Mordecai told them} to observe those days with joyful celebration and by giving gifts to one another. {Mordecai} also {told them that} they should help the poor on those days. ²³The Jews were already celebrating those days that way. So they {readily} agreed to do what Mordecai had instructed them to do.

²⁴{They would celebrate those days to remember} how Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had tried to destroy them. He had thrown a Pur (that is, a lot) {to find out what would be the best day} to attack the Jews and destroy them completely. ²⁵{They would also remember how Esther dared to} come before the king {even though he did not summon her}. Then the king {allowed Mordecai to} send a letter {throughout the empire} saying that the king would make Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews happen to Haman instead. The king

also ordered his servants to hang Haman on a wooden pole. When the Jews in Susa killed his ten sons, the king had his servants hang their bodies, as well. ²⁶The {Persian} word {for “lot”} is “Pur.” That is why {the Jews} gave the name Purim to this celebration. Because of all of the amazing things that they had just experienced and because {Mordecai then} wrote {to them to tell them to observe this holiday}, ²⁷the Jews agreed to establish those two days as holidays and to observe them in the way that {Mordecai} had told them, on those specific days. They agreed that they and their descendants and everyone who became part of the Jewish people {would celebrate this festival of Purim} every year, forever. ²⁸So that is why every Jewish family in every generation {since} has celebrated these days as holidays, everywhere they have lived. The Jewish community and its descendants will always faithfully observe this festival of Purim.

²⁹Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with {help from} Mordecai the Jew, wrote a second letter about Purim. Because Esther was the queen, she was able to command the Jews to obey {what Mordecai had written} about Purim {in his letter}. ³⁰They sent {copies of this second} letter to all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Ahasuerus. It encouraged them that {their situation was now} peaceful and secure. ³¹{In this second letter,} Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther confirmed that Purim should be celebrated on the {fourteenth and fifteenth} days {of the month of Adar}. {They also confirmed} that the Jews should continue the times of fasting and mourning that the Jews had established for themselves and their descendants. ³²Esther issued a decree establishing Purim {as a holiday for the Jews}, and the {royal scribes} wrote it down in the book {of laws}.

Chapter 10

¹Then King Ahasuerus imposed a tax {on everyone} throughout his empire, even {on those living} on the islands of the {Mediterranean} Sea. ²{The king’s scribes} made a record in the royal chronicles of Media and Persia of all the great things that King Ahasuerus accomplished because he was so powerful. {They} also {wrote} there in a complete way the great {things that} Mordecai {did} because the king had promoted him to a very important position. ³Mordecai the Jew was able to do so much because he was the most powerful person in the empire after King Ahasuerus. He was also a leader among his own people. All of his fellow Jews respected him. He worked {hard} to make sure that the Jews would always prosper.

Job

Chapter 1

¹In the land named Uz, there was a man named Job. He obeyed God and always avoided doing evil things. ²He had seven sons and three daughters. ³He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, one thousand oxen, and five hundred donkeys. He also had many servants. This was the man who was the richest in all the area east of the Jordan River.

⁴Job's sons often held feasts in their houses. Whenever each one made a feast, he would invite all his brothers and sisters to come and eat together. ⁵After each celebration, Job would summon them. He would ask Yahweh to purify them from any action they might have committed during their feasting that would make them unacceptable to him. He would get up early in the morning, kill animals, and burn them on the altar {as sacrifices}, one for each {of his children}. {For} Job {always said}, "Perhaps my children have sinned and said something evil about God in their hearts."

⁶{One} day, the angels came and gathered together in front of Yahweh, and Satan came, too. ⁷Yahweh asked Satan, "Where have you just come from?"

Satan replied, "I have come from the earth, where I been traveling back and forth {to see what is happening}."

⁸Yahweh said to Satan, "Have you noticed Job, {who worships me}? No one else on earth honors me and lives in such a right way as he does. He always refuses to do anything evil." ⁹Satan replied to Yahweh, "What you say is true, but Job honors you only because of what you have done for him. ¹⁰You have always protected him, his family, and everything he owns. You make him succeed in whatever work he tries to do, and he has very much livestock all over his land. ¹¹But if you attacked what he owns and took it away, he would curse you in front of everyone."

¹²Yahweh replied to Satan, "So this is what you want me to do! All right, I will permit you to take away everything that he has. But do not harm him in his own body."

Satan agreed and then left Yahweh in order to {plan how he would attack Job}.

¹³One day after that, Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the home of their oldest brother.

¹⁴{While they were doing that, a} messenger arrived at Job's home and said to him, "While your oxen were plowing the fields and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵a group of men from the people group of Sheba came and attacked us. They killed all your servants who were working in the fields and took away all the oxen and donkeys! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

¹⁶While he was still talking to Job, another messenger arrived. He said to Job, "Lightning from the sky struck and killed all the sheep and all the men who were taking care of them! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

¹⁷While he was still talking to Job, a third messenger arrived. He said to Job, "Three groups of robbers from the region of Chaldea came and attacked us. They stole all the camels and killed all the men who were taking care of them. I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

¹⁸While he was still talking to Job, a fourth messenger arrived. He said to Job: "Your sons and daughters were feasting in the home of their oldest brother. ¹⁹Suddenly a very strong wind came from the desert and struck the house. The house collapsed on your sons and daughters and killed them all! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

²⁰Then Job stood up and tore his robe and shaved his head {because he was very sad}. Then he laid down on the ground to worship God. ²¹He said,

“When I was born, I was wearing no clothes.

When I die, I will not take any clothes with me.

It is Yahweh who gave me everything that I possessed,

and it is Yahweh who has taken it all away.

But we must always praise Yahweh!”

²²{So in spite of all the things that happened to Job,} he did speak not {like a foolish man}—he did not sin by saying that what God had done was wrong.

Chapter 2

¹On another day, the angels came again and gathered together in front of Yahweh; Satan also came again.

²Yahweh asked Satan, “Where have you come from this time?” Satan replied, “I have come from the earth, where I have been traveling back and forth to see what is happening.”

³Yahweh asked Satan, “You have you noticed my servant Job, who worships me, have you not?

He continues to honor me; he is very exceptional, for he lives in a way that is more right than anyone else on the earth. He does this even though you persuaded me to attack him for no reason.”

⁴Satan replied to Yahweh, “He praises you only because you have helped him. People will give up everything they have to save their own lives. ⁵But if you harm his body, he will surely curse you in front of everyone!”

⁶Yahweh replied to Satan, “All right, you may do to him whatever you like, but do not cause him to die.”

⁷So Satan left, and he caused Job to suffer with very painful boils, from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet.

⁸Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped the boils on his skin, and he sat in ashes to mourn and wail.

⁹His wife said to him, “Are you still trying to be loyal to God? You should curse God, and then go ahead and die.”

¹⁰But Job replied, “You talk like people talk who do not know God. We should not only accept the good things that God does for us. We should also accept the bad things.” So in spite of all these things that happened to Job, he did not offend God by saying anything against him.

¹¹Among Job's friends were Eliphaz from the town of Teman, Bildad from the land of Shuah, and Zophar from the land of Naamah. When they heard about all the terrible things that had happened to Job, they left their homes and went together to Job to mourn with him and to comfort him. ¹²But when they saw Job from a distance, they almost did not recognize him. They wailed loudly, they tore their robes, and they threw dust into the air that settled on their heads. They did this to show how sorry they were for him. ¹³Then they sat on the ground with Job for seven days. None of them said anything to him, because they saw that he was suffering greatly, and they did not think that anything that they could say would lessen his pain.

Chapter 3

¹Finally, Job spoke, and he cursed the day that he was born. ²He said,

³“I wish that the day when I was born could be eradicated,

the night when I was born.

⁴I wish that the day when I was born could have been dark.

I wish that God who is in heaven would forget about that day,

and that the sun would not have shone on it.

⁵I wish that thick darkness would have filled that day,

and that death would have come over it like a shadow

and blotted out all light,

and caused the people then to be terrified.

⁶I wish that the night when I was born would be erased from the calendar,

that it would never again appear as one night in any month,

and that it would not be included in any calendar.

⁷I wish that no child would again be born on that date,

and that no one would again be happy then.

⁸The magicians who are able to awaken the great sea monster—I want them to curse the day I was born.

⁹I wish that the stars that shone early in the morning on that day after I was born may not shine again.

If only those stars had wished in vain for light to shine,

and that they had not shone on that day.

¹⁰That was an evil day because my mother's womb was not closed;

instead, I was born, and I have now experienced all these terrible things.

¹¹I wish that I had died when I was born;

I wish I had perished when I came out from my mother's womb.

¹²I wish that my mother had never welcomed me.

I wish that she had not nursed me at her breasts.

¹³If I had died at the time when I was born,

I would now be asleep, resting peacefully.

¹⁴I would be resting with kings who built beautiful tombs which are now in ruins,

and I would be resting with their officials who have also died.

¹⁵I would be resting with princes who were wealthy,

whose palaces were filled with gold and silver.

¹⁶I wish that I had been buried like a child who had died in its mother's womb

and never lived to see the light.

¹⁷After wicked people die, they do not cause any more troubles;
those who are very tired now will rest.

¹⁸Those who were in prison rest peacefully after they die;
they no longer have slave drivers who curse them.

¹⁹Rich people and poor people are alike after they die,
and those who were slaves no longer have to obey their masters.

²⁰Why does God allow those who are suffering greatly like me to continue to remain alive?
Why does he allow them to live, those who are very miserable?

²¹They long to die, but they do not die.
They desire to die more than people desire to find hidden treasure.

²²When they finally die and are buried, they are very happy.

²³I do not understand why God keeps alive anyone whom he keeps from being happy,
anyone whom he forces to live in misery.

²⁴I cry very much; as a result, I cannot eat;
I groan as easily as a river flows with water.

²⁵Things that I always worried might happen to me—these things have happened to me;
things that I always dreaded have come upon me.

²⁶Now I have no peace in my heart;
I have no quietness;
I cannot rest;
instead, I have only troubles.”

Chapter 4

¹Then Eliphaz replied to Job. He said,

²“Will you please allow me to say something to you?
I am not able to remain silent any longer.

³In the past, you have instructed many people,
and you have encouraged those for whom it was difficult to trust in God.

⁴In the past, when you spoke to others who were suffering, you helped them;
they were able to rejoice again because of God.

⁵But now, when you yourself suffer from disasters, you become discouraged.

The disasters hit you, and you are stunned.

⁶You say that you honor God; so you should be trusting in him, for him not to let you suffer.

If you really had not sinned, you would have been confident that God would not let these disasters happen to you!

⁷Think about this: No innocent people ever die when they are still young!

God never kills innocent people!

⁸I have seen this happen: if farmers plant bad seeds, they do not harvest good crops;
anyone who starts trouble for others later brings trouble on himself.

⁹These people die when God commands them to,
because he is very angry with them.

¹⁰Even though wicked people may be very powerful like young lions,
God destroys them.

¹¹They will die like older lions that starve to death when there are no animals left to eat.
Their children will scatter from each other like young lions that separate from each other to find food.

¹²I heard a message that someone came
and whispered to me.

¹³He spoke to me at night when I was having a bad dream that disturbed me.

¹⁴It caused me to be afraid and tremble;
it caused all my bones to shake.

¹⁵A ghost glided past my face
and caused the hair on the back of my neck to stand straight up.

¹⁶It stopped, but I could not see what it really looked like.

But I knew that there was some being in front of me,
and it said in a quiet voice,

¹⁷No human being can be more righteous than God.
No man can be better than God, who made him.

¹⁸God cannot be sure that his own angels will always do what is right;
he declares that some of them have done wrong.

¹⁹So he certainly cannot trust human beings whom he has made from dust and clay,
human beings, whom disaster crushes as easily as you can crush a moth!

²⁰People are sometimes in good health in the morning, but by the evening they are dead.
They are gone forever and no one even pays attention.

²¹Their families and possessions are like tents that collapse suddenly when you pull up their stakes; they perish suddenly without anyone ever knowing why.”

Chapter 5

¹“Job, no one will stop you from calling out for someone to help you, but I am certain that no angel will come to you!

²Foolish people die because they are resentful; people whom others easily deceive—these people die because they envy others.

³I have seen foolish people who seemed to be successful, but suddenly they experienced disaster because I cursed their home.

⁴Their sons are never safe; they always lose to their opponents in court, because there is no one to defend them.

⁵Hungry people steal the crops that foolish people harvest; they even steal the crops that grow among thorns, and greedy people take away the wealth of those foolish people.

⁶But it is not the farmland that makes bad things happen; troubles do not grow up from the ground like plants.

⁷People make trouble for themselves from the time that they are born; this is as certain as the fact that sparks shoot up from a fire.

⁸If I were suffering like you are, I would ask God for help and tell him what I am complaining about.

⁹He does great things, things that we cannot understand; we cannot even count the marvelous things that he does.

¹⁰He sends rain on the ground; he makes it rain on our fields.

¹¹He defends those who are humble, and puts those who mourn into places where they are safe.

¹²He causes crafty people to not be able to do what they plan to do, with the result that they achieve nothing.

¹³The people who think they are wise—he makes their own traps catch them;

the result is that they do not succeed.

¹⁴It is as though even in the daytime they were living in darkness
and were groping around trying to find the road at noontime like people do at night.

¹⁵But God saves helpless people from the wicked who say evil things about them;
he saves poor people from powerful people harming them.

¹⁶So poor people confidently expect that good things will happen to them;
but God stops wicked people from saying evil things.

¹⁷But those whom God corrects are fortunate;
so do not despise it when God, who can do anything, disciplines you.

¹⁸He wounds people, but then he puts bandages on those wounds;
he hurts people, but he also heals them.

¹⁹He will rescue you many times from your troubles,
with the result that nothing evil will happen to you.

²⁰When there is little food to eat, he will not allow you to die,
and when there is a war, your enemies will not kill you.

²¹God will protect you when people say false, evil things about you;
you will not be afraid when many things around you perish.

²²You will be able to laugh when that happens and when there is nothing to eat,
and you will not be afraid of wild animals.

²³You will not worry about having big rocks in your fields that will make plowing difficult,
and you will not worry that wild animals might attack you.

²⁴You will know that things will go well for you in your home;
when you look at your livestock, you will see that they are all there.

²⁵You will be certain that you will have many descendants,
who will be as numerous as blades of grass.

²⁶You will become very old before you die,
like sheaves of grain continue to grow until it is time to harvest and thresh them.

²⁷My friends and I have thought carefully about these things, and we know that they are true,
so pay attention to what I have said!"

Chapter 6

¹Then Job spoke again to Eliphaz:

²"If all my troubles and misery could be put on a scale and weighed,

³they would be heavier than all the sand along the ocean shores.

That is why I spoke very rashly about the day that I was born.

⁴It is as though Almighty God has shot me with arrows.

It is as though those arrows have poison on their tips, and that poison has gone into my spirit.

The things that God has done to me are like soldiers lined up to attack me.

⁵Just like a wild donkey does not complain by braying when it has plenty of grass to eat,

and an ox does not complain by bellowing when it has food to eat,

I would not complain if you were really helping me.

⁶People complain when they must eat food that has no salt

or food that is slimy and tasteless;

that is what your words are like, Eliphaz.

⁷I do not want to eat food like that,

because it disgusts me,

and I do not like what you have said to me.

⁸I wish that God would do for me what I have asked of him:

⁹I wish that he would crush me and let me die.

I wish that he would reach out his hand and take away my life.

¹⁰If he would do that, I would be comforted because I would know that in spite of the great pain that I have suffered,

I have always obeyed what God, the Holy One, has commanded.

¹¹But now I do not have enough strength to endure all these things.

And since I have nothing to hope for in the future,

it is difficult for me to be patient now.

¹²I am not strong like rocks are,

and my body is not made of bronze.

¹³So I am not able to help myself;

I am not wise enough for that.

¹⁴When a man has many troubles, his friends should be kind to him,

even if he stops honoring Almighty God.

¹⁵But you, my friends, are not dependable.

You are like streams in the wilderness: They spill over their banks in the spring

¹⁶when the melting ice and snow make them overflow,

¹⁷but when the dry season comes, there is no water flowing in those streams,
and the channels dry up.

¹⁸The caravans of merchants turn off their road to search for water,
but there is no water in those streambeds,
so the merchants die in the desert.

¹⁹The men in those caravans searched for some water
because they were sure that they would find some.

²⁰But they did not find any,
so they were very disappointed.

²¹Similarly, you friends have not helped me at all!
You have seen that terrible things have happened to me,
and you are afraid that God might do similar things to you.

²²After I lost all my wealth, I did not ask any of you for money.
I did not plead with any of you to spend some of your money to help me.

²³I never asked any of you to rescue me from my enemies,
and I did not ask you to save me from those who oppressed me.

²⁴Answer me now, and then I will be quiet;
tell me what wrong things I have done!

²⁵When people speak what is true, it can be painful for the listener to hear honest words.
But what have all your arguments proven about me?

²⁶I am a man who has nothing to hope for,
but you try to correct me, and you think what I say is as useless as the wind!

²⁷You do not sympathize with me at all for the things that I am suffering.
You will do anything to get something for yourselves! You would even play a game to see who gets an orphan as a prize!

²⁸Please look at me! I will not lie while I am talking straight to you.

²⁹Stop saying that I have sinned, and stop criticizing me unjustly!

You should realize that I have not done things that are wrong.

³⁰Do you think that I am lying?

No, I am not lying, because I know what is right to say, and what is wrong."

Chapter 7

¹"People need to work hard on this earth like soldiers do;
all during the time that we are alive, we need to work as hard as any hired worker.

²We are like slaves who keep wanting to be in the cool of evening,
and we are like workers who keep waiting to be paid.

³God has given to me many months in which I think that it is useless to remain alive;
he has assigned to me many nights during which I feel miserable.

⁴When I lie down at night I say, 'How long will it be until I get up?'
But the nights are long, and I toss on my bed until the dawn.

⁵My body is covered with maggots and scabs;
pus oozes out of my open sores.

⁶My days pass as quickly as a weaver's shuttle;
when one day ends, I never expect that things will be better the next day.

⁷God, do not forget that my life is as short as a single breath;
I think that I will never again experience being happy.

⁸God, you see me now,
but some day you will not see me anymore.
You will search for me, but I will be gone because I will be dead.

⁹Like a cloud passes and disappears,
people die and descend to the place where dead people are, and they do not return;

¹⁰they never return to their houses,
and the people who are still alive do not remember them anymore.

¹¹So I will not be silent;
while I am suffering, I will speak;
I will complain to God about what has happened to me
because I am very angry.

¹²God, why do you watch closely what I am doing?

Do you think that I am a dangerous sea monster?

¹³When I lie down at night, I say to myself, 'I will go to sleep and stop suffering;
my pain will be less while I am sleeping.'

¹⁴But then you give me dreams that cause me to be afraid;
you give me visions that terrify me;

¹⁵these things make me wish that someone would strangle me to death,
rather than for me to continue to be alive when I am only a bunch of bones.

¹⁶I detest continuing to be alive; I do not want to live for many more years.
Allow me to be alone, because I will be alive for only a very short time.

¹⁷We human beings are not very important;
so why do you pay so much attention to us?

¹⁸You look at us every morning to see what we are doing,
and you examine us every moment to see if we are doing what is right.

¹⁹When will you stop looking at me and leave me alone for a little time, long enough to swallow my own spit?

²⁰Why do you watch me constantly?

If I sin, that certainly does not harm you!

Why have you set me up like a target to shoot at?

Do you consider me to be a heavy load that you are forced to carry?

²¹If I have sinned, are you not able to forgive me

for the wrong things that I have done?

Soon I will lie in my grave;

you will search for me, but you will not find me because I will be dead and gone."

Chapter 8

¹Then Bildad, from the Shuah area, spoke to Job. He said,

²"Job, how much longer will you talk like this?

What you say is as useless as a big wind.

³Almighty God certainly never does anything unfairly.

He always does what is right.

⁴Your children have sinned against him;

this is evident because he has punished them for those evil things.

⁵But now, if only you will earnestly request Almighty God to help you!

⁶If only you were pure and honest!

Then he will surely do something good for you

and reward you by giving your family back to you and making you prosper.

⁷Even though you were not very prosperous before,

during the last stage of your life you would become very wealthy.

⁸I request you to think about what happened long ago

and to consider what our ancestors found out.

⁹It seems as though we were born only yesterday

and we know very little;

our time here on the earth disappears quickly, like a shadow that is here and then gone.

¹⁰So why not allow your ancestors to teach you anything?

Let them tell you what they learned!

¹¹Papyrus certainly does not grow away from marshland;

reeds certainly cannot grow where there is no water.

¹²If the water dries up while they are blossoming,

they wither more quickly than any other plant.

¹³Those who do not pay attention to what God says are like those reeds;

godless people stop confidently expecting that good things will happen to them.

¹⁴The things they confidently expect to happen do not happen;

things they trust will help them are as weak as a spider's web.

¹⁵If they think they will be safe because they are wealthy, they will not be safe;

the things they think will keep them safe—those things will disappear.

¹⁶Godless people are like plants that are watered before the sun rises:

their shoots spread all over the gardens.

¹⁷The roots of those plants twist around the piles of stones

and cling tightly to the rocks.

¹⁸But if a gardener pulls those plants out,

it is as though the place where they were planted says, 'They were never here!'

That is what happens to wicked people who do not pay attention to what God says.

¹⁹Truly, this is all the joy that evil people have:

other people just come and take their places.

²⁰So, I tell you, Job, God will not reject you if you honor him,
but he does not help evil people.

²¹He will always enable you to laugh
and to shout joyfully.

²²But those who hate you will be very ashamed,
and the homes of wicked people will disappear.”

Chapter 9

¹Then Job replied,

²“Yes, yes, I know.

But how can anyone say to God, ‘I am innocent’?

³If someone wanted to argue with God about that,
God could ask him a thousand questions
and that person would not be able to answer any of them!

⁴God is very wise and powerful;
no one who has tried to argue against him has ever been able to win.

⁵He even moves mountains in earthquakes without telling anyone in advance.
When he is angry, he turns the mountains upside down.

⁶He sends earthquakes that shake the ground;
he causes the columns that support the earth to shake.

⁷Some days he speaks to the sun, and it does not rise,
and some nights he prevents the stars from shining.

⁸He alone stretched [stretches] out the sky;
he alone puts his feet on the waves and stops their violence.

⁹He set in their places the groups of stars— the Bear, Orion, the Pleiades, and the groups of stars in the southern sky.

¹⁰He does great things that we cannot understand;
he does more marvelous things than we are able to count.

¹¹He passes by where I am, but I cannot see him;
he moves further on, but I do not see him go.

¹²If he wants to snatch someone away, no one could stop him;
no one dares ask him, 'Why are you doing that?'

¹³God will not very easily stop being angry;
he defeated the servants of Rahab, the great sea monster.

¹⁴If God took me to court,
what could I say to answer him?

¹⁵Even though I would be innocent, I would not be able to answer him.
All I could do would be to request God, my judge, to act mercifully toward me.

¹⁶If I summoned him to come to the courtroom and he said that he would come,
I would not believe that he would pay attention to what I would say.

¹⁷He sends storms to batter me,
and he bruises me many times without any reason.

¹⁸It is as though he will not let me get my breath
because he causes me to suffer all the time.

¹⁹If I tried to wrestle with him, there would be no way to defeat him,
because he is stronger than I am.

If I called him to appear in court,
there is no one who could force him to go there.

²⁰Even though I was innocent, anything I said would cause him to punish me;
even though I had not done anything wrong, he would still prove that I was guilty.

²¹I have not done anything wrong, but that is not important anymore because I do not care what happens to me.
I despise living.

²²Nothing is important to me
because God will get rid of all of us, both those who are innocent and those who are wicked.

²³When people experience disaster and it causes them to suddenly die,
God laughs at it, even if they are innocent.

²⁴God has allowed wicked people to control what happens in the world.
It is as though he had caused judges to be blind, no longer able to judge fairly.
If it is not God who has done that,
who, then, has done it?

²⁵My days pass very quickly, like a fast runner who passes one by;

it is as though the days run away, and nothing good ever happens to me.

²⁶My life goes by very rapidly, like a swiftly sailing boat made from reeds
or like an eagle that swoops down to seize an animal.

²⁷If I smile and say to God, 'I will forget what I am complaining about;
I will stop looking sad and try to be cheerful,'

²⁸then I become afraid because of all that I am suffering
because I know that God does not consider that I am innocent.

²⁹He will condemn me anyway,
so why should I keep trying in vain to defend myself?

³⁰If I washed myself with snow
or cleansed my hands with lye
to get rid of my guilt,

³¹he would still throw me into a filthy pit;
as a result it would be as though even my clothes would detest me.

³²God is not a human, as I am,
so there is no way that I could answer him to prove that I am innocent
if we went together to have a trial in a courtroom.

³³There is no one to mediate,
no one who has authority over both of us.

³⁴I wish someone else could stop God from making me suffer,
and that he would not continue to terrify me.

³⁵If he did that, I would declare that I am innocent without being afraid of him
because I know within myself that I really have not done what is wrong like God thinks that I have.

Chapter 10

¹I detest living any longer.
I will not stop saying why I am complaining.
Since I am very unhappy, I will speak.

²I will say to God, 'Do not just say that you must punish me;
in addition, tell me what wrong you saw that I have done.

³Does it please you to oppress me,

to abandon me, whom you created,
and, at the same time, to help wicked people to do the things that they plan to do?

⁴Do you understand things the way that we humans do?

⁵Do you live for only a few years, like [as] we do?

⁶So why do you continue to search for my faults
and to hunt for my sins?

⁷You know that I am not guilty,
and that no one can rescue me from your power.

⁸With your hands you created me and shaped my body,
but now you are deciding that you should not have done that, and you are destroying me instead.

⁹Do not forget that you made me from a piece of clay;
are you going to cause me to become soil again?

¹⁰You certainly formed me when I was conceived,
and you put me together inside my mother's womb.

¹¹You fastened my bones together with sinews,
and then you covered them with flesh inside my skin.

¹²You have caused me to be alive; you have faithfully loved me,
and you have carefully preserved me.

¹³But you kept secret what you were planning to do to me;
I am certain that you were planning to do these things to me.

¹⁴You were watching to see if I would sin,
so that, if I did sin, you would refuse to forgive me.

¹⁵If I am a wicked man, I hope that terrible things will happen to me.
But even if I am righteous, I still must bow my head and feel ashamed
because I am very disgraced and feel miserable.

¹⁶And if I am proud, you hunt me like a lion hunts for some animal to kill,
and you act powerfully to injure me.

¹⁷You constantly find more witnesses to testify that I have done what is wrong,
and you continually become more angry with me.

It is as though you are [were] always bringing new troops to attack me.

¹⁸God, why did you allow me to be born?

I wish had died when I was born, and that no one had ever seen me.

¹⁹I think it would have been better if I had been carried directly from my mother's womb to the grave than for me to live.

²⁰I think that there are only a few days for me to remain alive;
so allow me to be alone, in order that I may have a little peace

²¹before I go to the place from which I will never return,
[a place] where it is always gloomy and very dark,

²²a place of darkness and dark shadows where everything is confused
[and] where even the small light there is like darkness."

Chapter 11

¹Then Zophar, the friend from the region of Naamah, said this to Job:

²"Should no one answer all that you have said?

Just because you talk a lot, that fact should not persuade us to declare that you are innocent.

³Job, should your babbling really cause us to be silent?

When you make fun of what we think, certainly there should be someone to rebuke you and cause you to be ashamed!

⁴You say, 'What I say is true;

God knows that I am innocent.'

⁵But I wish that God would talk
and say something to answer you!

⁶God knows everything about everything,
so I wish that he would tell you the secrets that he knows because he is wise.

It would be good if you realized that God is punishing you less than you deserve!

⁷Tell me, will you ever be able to find out the things about God that are very difficult to understand?

Will you be able to find out everything that there is to know about Almighty God?

⁸What there is to know about God is greater than the distance from earth to heaven;
so there is no way that you can understand it all.

It is greater than the distance from here to the place of the dead;
so it is impossible for you to know it all.

⁹What there is to know about God is wider than the earth

and wider than the ocean.

¹⁰If God comes to you and puts you in prison and then brings you to a trial,
who can stop him?

¹¹He knows which people are worthless;
and when he sees people doing wicked things, he certainly does not ignore them.

¹²Stupid people like you will start to become wise
when wild donkeys start giving birth to people.

¹³Job, repent and make your heart humble;
reach out your hands toward God and plead with him.

¹⁴If you have done evil things, stop doing them;
and do not allow any people in your house to do wicked deeds.

¹⁵If you do that, surely you will be able to carry your head high, because you will not be ashamed;
you will be strong and not afraid of anything.

¹⁶You will forget all your troubles;
they will be like the water that has all flowed away and dried up.

¹⁷Your troubles will be ended, like the darkness ends at the dawn;
it will be as though the sun were shining brightly on you, like it shines at noon.

¹⁸You will feel safe, because you will be confident that good things will happen to you;
God will protect you and allow you to rest safely each night.

¹⁹You will lie down to sleep, and no one will make you afraid.
And many people will come and request you to be kind to them.

²⁰But wicked people will not be able to understand why bad things are happening to them;
they will not have any way to escape from their troubles.
The only thing that they will want to do is to die. "

Chapter 12

¹Then Job said to his three friends,

²"There is no doubt that you are the people to whom everyone should listen,
and that when you die, there will be no more wise people alive.

³But I have as much good sense as you do;
I am no less wise than you are.

Certainly everyone knows all that you have said.

⁴My friends all laugh at me now.

Previously I habitually requested God to help me, and he always answered me.

I am righteous, and I honor God, but now everyone laughs at me.

⁵It is easy for people like you, who have no troubles, to laugh at people like me; you make us who are already suffering to have even more troubles.

⁶Meanwhile, bandits live peacefully,
and no one threatens those who cause God to become angry;
the god they worship is their own strength.

⁷But ask the wild animals what they know about God;
if they could speak they would teach you.
If you could ask the birds,
they would tell you.

⁸If you could ask the creatures that crawl on the ground, or the fish in the sea,
they would tell you about God.

⁹All of them certainly know that it is Yahweh who has done this.

¹⁰He directs the lives of all living creatures;
he gives breath to all us humans to enable us to live.

¹¹When we hear what people like you say,
we think carefully about what they say to determine what is good and what is bad,
like we taste food to know what is good and what is bad.

¹²Old people are usually very wise;
because they have lived a long time, they understand much.

¹³And God is wise and very powerful;
he has good sense and understands everything.

¹⁴If he tears something down, no one can rebuild it;
if he puts someone in prison, no one can open the door to let that person to escape.

¹⁵When he prevents rain from falling, everything dries up.
When he causes a lot of rain to fall, the result is that there are floods.

¹⁶He is the one who is truly strong and wise;
he rules over those who deceive others and those whom they deceive.

¹⁷He sometimes causes the king's officials to lose their wisdom and grieve because of it
and he causes judges to become foolish.

¹⁸He takes from kings the ornaments that they wear
and puts loincloths around their waists, causing them to become slaves.

¹⁹He also makes priests grieve,
and he takes power away from those who rule others.

²⁰He sometimes causes those whom others trust to be unable to speak,
and he causes old men to no longer have good sense.

²¹He causes people to despise those who rule,
and he causes those who are powerful to become weak.

²²He shows to us things that were secret,
even things that were in the world of the dead.

²³He causes some nations to become very great,
and later he destroys them;
he causes the territory of some nations to become much larger,
and later he brings others to defeat them and take them prisoner.

²⁴He causes some rulers to become foolish,
and then he causes them to wander around, lost, as if they were in the wilderness with no way out.

²⁵It is as if they were feeling around in the darkness, without any light;
as if they were drunk, not knowing what they should do."

Chapter 13

¹"I have seen everything that you have seen,
and I have heard and understood all that you have said.

²What you know, I also know;
I do not know less than you.

³But I would like to speak with Almighty God, not with you;
I would like to argue with him and show him that I am innocent.

⁴As for you, you tell lies and do not allow people to know unpleasant truth,
like someone who covers up the bad surface of a wall with whitewash.
You are all like doctors who sell people useless medicine.

⁵I wish that you would be silent;

that would be wiser than anything you have said to me.

⁶Listen to what I will say to you now;

listen while I am saying what is true about myself.

⁷You are telling lies to help God;

you are saying what is false in order to help him!

⁸You would really like to be kind to him by defending what he does, would you not?

It is as if you were trying to prove in a court that he is innocent!

⁹But if he, sitting as the judge, looked closely at you, he would find that what you are doing for him is bad!

You have deceived other people, but do not think that you can lie about him in court and say that you are defending him!

¹⁰If you say clever things to persuade God to take your side,

he will surely rebuke you.

¹¹He will certainly bring the full force of his power against you;

you will become very afraid of him.

¹²What you have said—the things that you think are so wise—are as useless as ashes;

what you say to defend how you think is no better than clay that quickly crumbles.

¹³So be quiet and allow me to speak;

after that, it will not matter what happens to me.

¹⁴I am ready to risk my life;

I am even willing to risk that God will execute me for what I say.

¹⁵If he kills me, then I will not have anyone else whom I can confidently expect to help me,

but I am going to defend my behavior in his presence anyway.

¹⁶No wicked person would dare to stand in the presence of God,

but because I say that I have not done things that are wrong,

perhaps, if I can prove that to God, he will declare me innocent."

¹⁷"God, listen very carefully to what I say; pay attention to me.

¹⁸I am ready to argue that I am innocent,

and I know that you also will declare that I am not guilty.

¹⁹I certainly do not think that you or anyone else will say that what I say is false;

if you did so, then I would speak no more, and I would die.

²⁰I am requesting you to do two things for me;
if you do them, I will not try to hide from you.

²¹The first thing that I request is that you stop punishing me,
and the second thing that I request is that you stop terrifying me.

²²Speak first, and then I will reply;
or allow me to speak first, and then you reply.

²³What have I done that is wrong? What sins have I committed?
Show me how I have disobeyed you.

²⁴Why do you refuse to be friendly to me?
Why do you act toward me as though I were your enemy?

²⁵I am as insignificant as a leaf that the wind blows.
Why are you trying to make me afraid?
Why are you making me suffer?
After all, I am as useless as a bit of dry chaff!

²⁶It seems that you are writing things to accuse me of having sinned,
and that you are writing down even the bad things I did when I was young.

²⁷It is as though you have put my feet in stocks
and that you were watching me wherever I walk;
it is as though you were following my footprints to see where I have gone.

²⁸Because of this, my body is falling apart like rotten wood,
like a piece of cloth that the larvae of moths are eating.

Chapter 14

¹We humans are very frail. We are born, and
we live only a short time; we experience much trouble.

²We disappear quickly, like flowers that grow from the ground quickly and then wither and die.
We are like shadows that disappear when the sun stops shining.

³Yahweh, why do you keep watching me to see if I am doing something that is wrong?
Do you want to take me to court to judge me?

⁴No one can bring something acceptable to God out of something that is not acceptable to him.

⁵You have decided how long our lives will be.

You have decided how many months we will live,
and we cannot live longer than the time that you have decided.

⁶So please stop examining us, and allow us to be alone
so that we might enjoy our life of hard labor, if a hired worker can possibly do so.

⁷If we cut a tree down,
sometimes we hope that it will sprout again and grow new branches.

⁸Its roots in the ground may be very old,
and its stump may decay,

⁹but if some water falls on it,
it may bud and send up shoots like a young plant.

¹⁰But when we people lose all our strength and die,
we stop breathing, and then we are gone forever.

¹¹Just as water evaporates from a lake,
or as a riverbed dries up,

¹²people lie down and die and do not get up again.
Until the heavens do not exist any longer;
people who die do not wake up,
and no one can wake them up.

¹³Yahweh, I wish that you would put me safely in the place of the dead and forget about me, so that I do not suffer
any more
until you are no longer angry with me.

I wish that you would decide how much time I would spend there,
and then remember that I am there.

¹⁴When we humans die, we will certainly not live again.

If I knew that we would live again, I would wait patiently
for you to release me from my sufferings.

¹⁵You would call me, and I would answer.

You would be eager to see me, one of the creatures that you had made.

¹⁶You would carefully see where I went,
and you would not be interested in seeing whether I sinned or not.

¹⁷The record of my sins would be sealed in a small bag,

and you would cover them.

¹⁸But, just as mountains crumble and rocks fall down from a cliff,

¹⁹and just as water slowly wears away the stones, and just as floods wash away soil,
you eventually destroy us; you do not allow us to continue to hope that we will keep on living.

²⁰You always defeat us, and then we die.

You cause our faces to look ugly after we die,
and you send us away.

²¹When we die, we do not know if our sons will grow up and do things that will cause other people to honor them.
Or if they become disgraced, we do not know that either.

²²We will feel our own pain; we will not feel anything else;
we will be sorry for ourselves, not for anyone else."

Chapter 15

¹Then Eliphaz replied to Job:

²"If you were truly wise, you would not have replied to us by claiming that you know a lot;
what you are saying is just a lot of hot air.

³You should not be saying things that do not benefit anyone;
you should not say things that do no one any good.

⁴You are teaching others not to respect God,
and you are keeping them from honoring him.

⁵You are wicked, and that is why you say what you do;
you talk like deceptive people talk.

⁶Everything that you say shows that God should punish you;
it is not necessary for me to prove that.

⁷Tell me, why do you think you know so much? You do not think that you were the first person who was ever born,
do you?

You do not think that you were born before God created the mountains, do you?

⁸Were you listening when God made all his plans?

Do you think that you are the only person who is wise?

⁹What do you know that we others do not know?

You do not understand anything that is not also clear to us.

¹⁰My friends and I are also wise;

we acquired wisdom from old gray-haired people,
from people who were born before your father was.

¹¹God wants to comfort you

and to speak gently to you;
that should be enough for you, but it is not enough, is it?

¹²Why do you allow yourself to be excited by your emotions?

Why do your eyes flash with anger?

¹³You are angry with God,

and so you say harsh things against him.

¹⁴How can any person, including you, be sinless?

How can anyone on the earth be completely righteous?

¹⁵God does not even trust his angels;

he does not consider the heavens to be completely pure.

¹⁶So he certainly does not trust disgusting people,

those who commit evil deeds as often as they drink water.

¹⁷Job, listen to what I tell you.

I will declare to you what I know,

¹⁸things that wise men have told me,

truths that their ancestors did not keep hidden.

¹⁹(God gave this land to those ancestors who were truly wise;

no one from another country came and caused them to think wrongly about God.)

²⁰Wicked people suffer with great pain all the time that they are alive;

that is what happens to those who oppress others.

²¹They constantly hear sounds that terrify them;

while they are prospering, robbers attack them.

²²Wicked people do not really think that they will escape from darkness;

they are sure that someone is waiting to kill them with a sword.

²³They wander around, searching for food, saying 'Where can I find some?'

They know that they will soon experience disasters.

²⁴Because they are afraid of those things happening to them, they worry

that these things will attack them as a king's army waits to attack its enemies and causes them to suffer.

²⁵These things happen to them because they shook their fists against Almighty God and thought that they were strong enough to defeat him.

²⁶They stubbornly rush to attack God thinking that a strong shield will protect them.

²⁷But they are so fat that they are unable to fight.

²⁸They have lived in cities that have been abandoned, cities which God declared would become a heap of ruins.

²⁹But they will not remain rich very long; Others will take everything that they own, and even their shadows will disappear from the earth.

³⁰They will not escape from the darkness of death; they will be like trees whose branches burn up. When God gives the command, they will die.

³¹If they are very foolish, with the result that they trust in things that are really worthless, then things that are worthless will be all that they get.

³²While they are still young, they will disappear; they will be like branches that wither and never become green again.

³³They will be like vines whose grapes fall off before they are ripe, like olive trees whose blossoms fall off before they produce any fruit.

³⁴Groups of wicked people will not have any descendants, and fires will completely burn up the homes of those who took money from bribes.

³⁵They plan to cause trouble and to do evil things, and in their hearts they are always preparing to deceive people."

Chapter 16

¹Job replied to Eliphaz and the others,

²"I have heard things like that before; all of you, instead of helping me, are only causing me to feel more miserable.

³Will your speeches, which are only wind, never end?

Eliphaz, what bothers you that makes you continue replying like this to me?

⁴If it were you three and not I who were suffering,
I could, in your place, say the things that you are saying.
I could make great speeches to criticize you,
and I could shake my head at you to ridicule you.

⁵Then you would see whether my words encouraged you or not;
you would see whether they made you feel your pain less.

⁶But now, if I talk, my pain does not decrease,
and if I am silent, my pain still certainly does not go away.

⁷God, you have now taken away all my strength;
you have destroyed all my family.

⁸You have shriveled me up,
and people think that shows me to be a sinner.
They see that I am only skin and bones,
and they think that proves that I am guilty.

⁹Because God is very angry with me and hates me,
it is as though he were a wild animal that tore me apart with his teeth
because he was my enemy.

¹⁰People gape at me with their mouths open to sneer at me;
they have struck me on the face to ridicule me,
and they crowd around me to threaten me.

¹¹It is as though God has handed me over to people who refuse to honor him
and has put me into the power of the wicked.

¹²Previously, I was living peacefully,
but he crushed me;
it is as though he grabbed my neck and smashed me to pieces;
it is as though he set me up like a target.

¹³It is as though I were a target, and that people were surrounding me and shooting arrows at me.
God's arrows pierce my kidneys
and cause the bile from my liver to spill onto the ground;
God does not pity me at all.

¹⁴It is as though I were a wall that he is breaking through time after time;

he rushes at me like a soldier who is attacking his enemy.

¹⁵Because I am mourning, I wear pieces of rough cloth that I have sewed together,
and I sit here in the dirt, very depressed.

¹⁶My face is red because I have cried very much,
and there are dark circles around my eyes.

¹⁷All this has happened to me even though I have not acted violently toward anyone,
and even though I always pray sincerely to God.

¹⁸When I die, I want the ground to act as though I had been murdered; I want it to cry out against those who killed me,
and I do not want anyone to stop me while I am demanding that God act justly toward me.

¹⁹But even now, I know that there is someone in heaven who will testify for me,
and he will say that what I have done is right.

²⁰My three friends scorn me,
but my eyes are full of tears while I cry out to God.

²¹I pray that the one who knows what I have done would come to plead with God for me
as a person pleads for his friend.

²²I say this because within a few years I will die;
I will walk along the road to a place from which I will never return."

Chapter 17

¹"My time to live is almost ended; I have no strength left;
those who have dug my grave are waiting for me.

²Those who are around me are making fun of me;
I must always see them mocking me."

³"God, it is as though I were in prison;
please pay the money in order that I may be released,
because there is certainly no one else who will help me.

⁴You have prevented my friends from understanding what is true about me,
but you will not allow them to triumph over me, saying that I have done wrong things.

⁵Our ancestors said, 'It often happens that when someone betrays his friends in order to get some of their property,
it is that person's children who will be punished for it;'

so I desire that will be true of these friends of mine who are lying about me.

⁶But now people use that saying of our ancestors when they talk about me;
they spit to insult me.

⁷My eyes have become dim because I am very sad,
and my arms and legs are as thin as shadows.

⁸People who are truly righteous will be shocked when they see what has happened to me;
they will be angry at those who refuse to honor God.

⁹Those who are truly righteous will continue to do what is right,
and those who live righteously will continue to become stronger.

¹⁰But all you friends of mine,
I do not find even one among you who is wise.

¹¹My time to live is almost ended; I have not been able to do the things that I planned to do.
As for the things I have most desired, there is no hope of them happening.

¹²My friends do not know when it is night and when it is day;
when it is night, they claim that it is daylight;
when it is becoming dark, they claim that it is getting light.

¹³I know that my home will be the place where dead people are,
where I will sleep in the darkness.

¹⁴I can say to the grave, 'Where I am buried, that place will be like a father to me.'
I can say to the maggots, 'You will be like a mother or younger sisters to me because that is where I will always be.'

¹⁵There is certainly no more hope left for me.
No one expects that I will have any more happiness.

¹⁶After I descend to the place where the dead are, I will not be able to expect anything good there.
I and the things I hope for will go down together into the soil."

Chapter 18

¹Then Bildad replied again:

²"Please stop talking!

If you would stop talking and listen, we could tell you something.

³Why do you think that we are as stupid as cattle and as unrighteous?

⁴By being very angry, you are only hurting yourself.

Do you think that everyone on the earth must leave to prove that you are right,
or do you think that God must move the rocks in the mountains to please you?

⁵What will happen is that the lives of wicked people like you end
as quickly as we can put out a light or extinguish the flame of a fire.

⁶When the lamps above them in their tents are extinguished,
there will be no light in those tents.

⁷While they are alive, they walk confidently,
but later it will be as though they stumbled and fell,
because they themselves do not pay attention to the advice that they give to others.

⁸It will be as though they had walked into their own net
or had fallen into a pit that they themselves dug.

⁹It will be as though a trap had grabbed their heels and held them fast,
¹⁰as though the end of a rope that was hidden on the ground
had sprung up and seized them when they walked on it.

¹¹Everywhere they go, there will be things that cause them to be terrified;
it will be as though those things were pursuing them and biting at their heels.

¹²They will become hungry, with the result that they will be strong no longer.
They will continually experience disasters.

¹³Diseases will spread all over their skin;
diseases will cause their bodies to decay.

¹⁴When they die, they will be snatched away from their tents
and brought to the one who rules over the dead.

¹⁵Then other people will live in their tents,
but only after they sprinkle sulfur on those tents to get rid of the disease!

¹⁶Because they will die and leave no descendants,
they will be like trees whose roots have dried up and whose branches have all withered.

¹⁷No one on the earth will remember them anymore;
no one on any street will even remember their names.

¹⁸They will have to leave the earth, where there is light,
and rush into the place where it is dark.

¹⁹They will have no children or grandchildren,

no descendants where they will have previously lived.

²⁰People from the east to the west who hear about what happened to them, everyone, will be shocked and horrified.

²¹This is what happens to unrighteous people like you, people who do not know God.”

Chapter 19

¹Then Job replied:

²“How long will you three torment me and discourage me by calling me wicked?

³You have insulted me many times; are you not ashamed for saying these things to me?

⁴Even if it were true that I had done wrong, I have not injured you!

⁵If you truly think that you are better than I am, and if you argue that I must be guilty because I am suffering,

⁶you should realize that it is God who has caused me to suffer. It is as though he has a net and that he has caught me in it.

⁷I cry out, ‘People are murdering me!’, but no one answers me.

I call out loudly, but there is no one, not even God, who acts fairly toward me.

⁸It is as though God has blocked my road, and I cannot go anywhere; it is as though he has forced me to try to find the road in the darkness.

⁹He has taken away my good reputation; it is as though he has removed a crown from my head.

¹⁰He batters me from every side, and I will soon die. I no longer expect him to do anything good for me.

¹¹He attacks me because he is very angry at me; he considers me to be his enemy.

¹²It is as though he were sending his army to attack me;

they surround my tent
and get ready to attack me.

¹³God has caused my brothers to abandon me,
and for all those who know me to act like strangers to me.

¹⁴All my relatives and good friends have left me.

¹⁵The people who were guests in my house have forgotten me,
and my female servants consider that I am a foreigner whom they do not know.

¹⁶When I summon my servants, they do not answer;
When I plead with them to come to help me, they do not come.

¹⁷My breath smells very bad to my wife so she stays away from me,
and my brothers detest me.

¹⁸Even young children despise me;
when I stand up to talk to them, they laugh at me.

¹⁹My dearest friends detest me,
and those whom I love very much have turned against me.

²⁰My body is only skin and bones;
I am barely alive.

²¹I plead with you, my three friends, pity me
because God has struck me very hard.

²²Why do you cause me to suffer, also? Do you think you are God?
Why do you never get enough of accusing me of doing wrong?

²³I wish that someone would take these words of mine
and write them permanently in a book in order that people can read them.

²⁴Or else, I wish that someone would carve my words on a rock with a chisel
in order that they would last forever.

²⁵But I know that the one who vindicates me in court is alive,
and that some day he will stand here on the earth and make the final decision about whether I deserve to be punished.

²⁶And even after diseases have destroyed my body,
still, in my body I will see God.

²⁷I will see him myself;

I will see him with my own eyes!

My emotions overwhelm me as I think about that!

²⁸If you three men say, 'This is how we will cause him to suffer!'

and you say, 'He is the one who has caused his own troubles,'

²⁹you should fear that God will punish you;

he punishes those like you with whom he is angry;

and when that happens, you will know that there is someone who judges people."

Chapter 20

¹Then Zophar replied again:

²"I am very troubled about what you have said,

so I want to reply very quickly.

³By saying these things you have insulted me,

but something within my understanding suggests to me how I may reply to you.

⁴Do you not know that from long ago,

ever since God first put people on the earth,

⁵that wicked people like you do not continue to rejoice for a long time,

and that people who refuse to honor God are happy only for a moment?

⁶Although their reputations reach up to the sky,

and their fame goes up as high as the clouds,

⁷they will disappear forever, like their own excrement,

and those who knew them will ask, 'Where did they go?'

⁸They will disappear as a dream does,

and they will exist no more.

They will vanish like dreams that people have during the night.

⁹Those people who now see those wicked people will never see them again;

even the people who lived with them will not see them anymore.

¹⁰Their children will be forced to return the valuable things that they stole from poor people.

¹¹The bodies of the wicked were once young and strong,

but they will die and be buried in the ground.

¹²Although doing wicked things was like having sweet food in their mouths

that they wanted to continue tasting,

¹³and although they did not want to stop doing those things,

¹⁴those evil things will someday become like poison that they swallow,
or like the poison from snakes.

¹⁵Wicked people pile up wealth for themselves, but they do not keep it forever,
just like people do not keep down the food that they vomit.
God takes their wealth from them.

¹⁶Doing evil deeds is like swallowing snake poison;
doing evil will kill the wicked as the bite of a poisonous snake will kill people.

¹⁷The wicked will not remain alive to see the abundant blessings from God,
which are like a stream that flows.

¹⁸They will be forced to give back the things that they stole from the poor;
they will not be able to continue to enjoy those things.

They will not remain happy because of what they got from their business

¹⁹because they oppressed poor people and refused to help them,
and they took other people's houses by cheating them.

²⁰They were always greedy and never satisfied.

So when they ate, they ate so much that they never saved anything that they enjoyed.

²¹When they finished eating their food, there was never anything left over because they had greedily eaten it all;
but now their prosperity will end.

²²When they are still very wealthy,
they will suddenly experience trouble.

The full power of everyone who lives in misery will crush them.

²³When the wicked people are filling their stomachs,
God will show that he is very angry with them, and he will punish them;
he will bring down suffering on them like the rain that falls on the ground.

²⁴They will try to escape from people who will attack them with iron weapons,
but arrows with bronze points will pierce them.

²⁵The arrows will go completely through their bodies and stick out of their backs;
the shiny points of the arrows will have blood dripping from them,
and those wicked people will be terrified.

²⁶Their valuable possessions will all be destroyed;
a fire started by God, not by humans, will burn them up
and will destroy the things that are left in their tents.

²⁷The angels in heaven will reveal the sins that those wicked people have committed,
and people on earth will stand up and testify against them.

²⁸On the day when God punishes people,
all the possessions in the wicked people's houses will be carried away, as if a flood had come.

²⁹That is what will happen to wicked people like you;
that is what God has decreed for them."

Chapter 21

¹Then Job replied in this way:

²"Listen to what I say, all of you;
that is the only thing that you can do that will comfort me.

³Be patient with me, and allow me to speak.
Then, after I am finished speaking, you can continue to make fun of me.

⁴It is certainly not people against whom I am complaining, but God!
And it is certainly right for me to be impatient!

⁵Look at me! Does what you see not cause you to be appalled
and to put your hands over your mouths and say no more?

⁶When I think about what has happened to me,
I am frightened and my entire body shakes.

⁷But allow me to ask this: 'Why do wicked people continue to live,
and become prosperous, and not die until they are very old?'

⁸They see their children around them,
and they watch them while they grow up and start to live in their own houses.

⁹Wicked people live in their own houses without being afraid,
and God does not punish them.

¹⁰Their bulls always mate with the cows successfully,
and the cows always give birth to calves and never miscarry.

¹¹Wicked people send their young children outside to play,

and the children jump around happily like lambs in a pasture.

¹²The children sing to the sound of tambourines and lyres,
and they are happy to hear the sound of flutes.

¹³Wicked people enjoy having good things all the time that they are alive,
and they die quietly and go down to the place of the dead.

¹⁴While they are alive, they say to God, 'Leave us alone;
we do not care about how you desire us to conduct our lives!

¹⁵Why do you, Almighty God, think that we should serve you?
What advantage do we get if we pray to you?'

¹⁶Wicked people think that they have become prosperous because of what they have done,
but I do not want to have anything to do with their thinking.

¹⁷How often does it happen that wicked people die,
without experiencing disasters?
Does God ever punish them because he is angry with them?

¹⁸He does not blow them away as wind blows away straw;
they are never carried off by a whirlwind.

¹⁹You say, 'When people have committed sins,
God waits and punishes their children because of those sins;'
I say that God should punish those who sin, not their children,
in order that the sinners may know that it is because of their own sins that they are being punished.

²⁰I hope that wicked people will live to experience God destroying them,
that they will experience Almighty God punishing them.

²¹After wicked people are dead,
they are not at all concerned for their families who are still alive.

²²Since God judges everyone, even those who are in heaven,
who can teach him anything?

²³Some people die while they are very healthy,
while they are peaceful and not afraid of anything.

²⁴Their bodies are fat;
their bones are strong.

²⁵Other people die being very miserable;

they have never experienced good things happening to them.

²⁶They die and are buried,

and maggots cover their bodies.

Everyone dies, so it is clear that dying is not always the punishment for being wicked.

²⁷Listen, I know what you three are thinking,

and I know the evil things that you plan to do to me.

²⁸You say, 'What happened to the tents in which wicked people were living?

The houses of evil rulers have been destroyed!'

²⁹Have you never asked people who travel much?

Do you not believe their reports about what they have seen,

³⁰that wicked people usually do not suffer at the time when there are great disasters;

that when God punishes people, someone rescues the wicked? that wicked people are the ones whom someone else rescues when God punishes people?

³¹There is no one who accuses wicked people,

and there is no one who pays them back for all the evil things that they have done.

³²When the corpses of wicked people are carried to their graves,

people are put there to guard those graves.

³³A huge number of people go to the grave site;

some go in front of the procession and some come behind,

and the wicked ones who have died surely feel good when people throw clods of dirt on their graves.

³⁴So how can you comfort me by talking nonsense?

Every reply that you give me is full of lies!"

Chapter 22

¹Then Eliphaz replied, saying this:

²"No one can be useful to God!

People who are wise can be useful to themselves, but not to God.

³If you were righteous, that would not please Almighty God, would it?

If you lived a perfect life, that would not help him, would it?

⁴Do you honor God, and is that why he punishes you?

Is that the reason that he puts you on trial?

⁵No, it certainly must be because you are extremely wicked.

It must be that no one can count the evil things that you have done!

⁶You must have lent money to others and wrongly forced them to give you things to guarantee that they would pay that money back to you;

you must have taken all their clothes and left them with nothing to wear.

⁷You must not have given water to those who were thirsty,

and you must have refused to give food to those who were hungry.

⁸Because you were very powerful, you must have taken over all the people's land,

and then you began to live on that land, even though others honored you very much.

⁹When widows came to you for help, you must have sent them away without giving them anything,

and you must have oppressed orphans.

¹⁰Because you did all those things, now there are traps that will catch you;

now things appear that terrify you and cause you to tremble.

¹¹It is as though it had become very dark, with the result that you cannot see anything,

and it is as though a flood covered you.

¹²But consider this, Job: God lives high up in the heavens.

From there he looks down on the highest stars.

¹³So why do you say, 'God knows nothing about what we are doing'?

And why do you say, 'Dark clouds keep him from seeing us, so he cannot judge us'?

¹⁴Do you think that while he walks on the dome that covers the sky,

where there are thick clouds around him, he cannot see what we do?

¹⁵Will you, Job, continue to conduct your life in the old way

that evil people have done for many years?

¹⁶They suddenly died while they were still young;

they disappeared like everything disappears when there is a flood.

¹⁷They kept saying to God, 'Leave us alone,' 'Allow us to be alone,'

and they also said defiantly, 'Almighty God can do nothing to harm us!'

¹⁸Yet it was God who filled their houses with good things;

so I cannot agree at all to follow what the wicked plan.

¹⁹When righteous people see that God punishes wicked people, they are glad,

and they laugh at those wicked people.

²⁰They say, 'Now our enemies have been destroyed,
and fire has burned up anything left of their wealth.'

²¹So, Job, be reconciled to God and make peace with him;
if you do that, good things will happen to you.

²²Allow him to teach you,
and put his words into your mind.

²³If you humble yourself and return to God, he will restore you;
if you stop doing all the evil things that you have been doing in your house,

²⁴and if you throw away your gold,
the fine gold from the dry stream beds in Ophir land,

²⁵then Almighty God will be to be as precious to you as your gold and your silver have been.

²⁶Then you will be happy because of God,
and you will be able to approach him confidently.

²⁷You will pray to him, and he will do what you request him to do;
you will do the things that you promised him that you would do.

²⁸Everything that you decide to do will be successful;
it will be as though a light were shining on the road in front of you.

²⁹God humbles those who are proud,
but he saves those who are downcast.

³⁰God rescues those who are not innocent;
they will be rescued because you do what is right."

Chapter 23

¹Then Job replied and said this:

²"Today I am again complaining bitterly to God;
I continue to groan, but I suffer even more.

³I wish that I knew where I could meet with him
so that I could go to the place where he lives.

⁴If I could do that, I would tell him why I know that I am innocent;
I would tell him many reasons for that.

⁵Then I would find out and understand what he would reply to me.

⁶Would he use his great power to argue with me?

No, he would listen to me carefully.

⁷I am an honest man, so I would be able to discuss things with him fairly,
and then he would declare that I am innocent, and he would not trouble me again.

⁸However, I have gone to the east, and he is not there;
I have gone to the west, but I have not found him there.

⁹I have gone north and I have gone south,
but I have not seen him anywhere for he keeps himself from me.

¹⁰He knows how I have conducted my life;
when he has finished testing me, he will see that I am as pure as gold whose impurities have all been burned out.

¹¹I have faithfully walked on the road that he showed me;
I have not turned away from obeying him.

¹²I have always obeyed what he commanded;
I have hidden away in my inner being the words that he has spoken.

¹³He never changes. There is no one who can stop him from doing what he desires.
Whatever he wants to do, he does.

¹⁴He will finish doing the things that he has planned for me,
and I am sure that he has thought about doing many things for me.

¹⁵So I am terrified when I am in front of him;
when I think about what he can do, I am very afraid.

¹⁶Almighty God has made me very afraid.

¹⁷The thick darkness in front of me has not make me silent,
even that terrible darkness that covers my face has not kept me from speaking."

Chapter 24

¹"Why does Almighty God not set a time when he will judge evil people?
The people who obey God never seem to see him judge the evil people.

²Some evil people remove the boundary markers of other people's land, in order to take their land;
they seize other people's sheep and put them in their own pastures.

³Some take away the donkeys that belong to orphans,

and they take widows' oxen to guarantee that the widows will pay back the money that they loaned to those widows.

⁴Some shove poor people off the road,
and they force poor people to find places to hide from them.

⁵The result is that poor people have to search for food in the desert plain
like wild donkeys do.

⁶The poor people harvest leftover grain in other people's fields,
and gather leftover grapes from vineyards that belong to wicked men.

⁷During the night they have nothing to cover their bodies,
nothing to keep them warm.

⁸When it rains in the mountains, they become very wet,
so they huddle under the rock ledges to protect themselves from the rain.

⁹Some evil men snatch poor, fatherless infants away from their mothers;
they say 'I will return your babies to you when you repay the money that I lent to you.'

¹⁰But the poor people walk around with no clothes on;
they are hungry while they are working to carry other people's bundles of grain to the places where their grain will be threshed.

¹¹Poor people are hired by these wicked people to make olive oil for them;
they tread on grapes to make juice for wine,
but they are not allowed to drink any of it when they are thirsty.

¹²In the cities, people who are wounded and dying cry out to God for help,
but God ignores their prayers.

¹³Some wicked people avoid the light because they do evil things in the dark;
they do not walk on roads that are lit.

¹⁴Murderers steal things during the night,
and then they rise before dawn in order that they may go out again and kill poor and needy people.

¹⁵Those who want to commit adultery wait for evening to come;
they say, 'I do not want anyone to see me,' so they keep their faces covered.

¹⁶It is during the night that robbers break into houses to steal things,
but during the day they hide because they want to avoid being seen in the light.

¹⁷All of those people want to do their evil deeds at night, not in the morning when it is light,
because they are not afraid of the things that happen during the night that terrify others.

¹⁸However, those wicked people will disappear very quickly,
and God will curse the land that they owned;
no one will go any longer to work in their vineyards.

¹⁹Just as the snow melts away when it is hot and there is no rain,
those who have sinned will disappear into the place where the dead people are.

²⁰Not even their mothers will remember them;
wicked people will be destroyed like trees that are cut down,
and maggots will eat their corpses.

²¹The wicked mistreat women who have been unable to give birth to children who would have grown up to take care of them;
the wicked they never help widows.

²²But God, by his power, gets rid of mighty people.
He causes the wicked people to die.

²³God allows them to think that they are secure and safe,
but he is watching them all the time.

²⁴They prosper for a little while,
and then suddenly they are gone;
God will make them die like all the other people;
they will be like stalks of grain that the farmers have cut off.

²⁵If this is not true, is there anyone who will show that I am a liar
and prove me wrong?"

Chapter 25

¹Then Bildad also replied:

²"God is very powerful; everyone should honor him very much;
he causes everything to be peaceful high up in heaven, with no confusion at all.

³Can anyone count the angels who are in his army in heaven?
Is there any person on whom his light does not shine?

⁴So how can God consider any person to be righteous?
How can he accept any human being?

⁵Consider this: God does not even think that the full moon is bright,

and he does not even accept the stars in the heavens as worthy of him.

⁶So what about humans?

They are as insignificant as maggots.

God does not think more highly of people than he thinks of worms.”

Chapter 26

¹Job replied to Bildad:

²“I am a very weak and helpless man;

you do not really think that you have helped me at all, do you?

³You certainly do not think that you have given me good advice, do you?—me, who am not wise at all.

⁴Who helped you to say all those great things?

Who inspired you to speak like you did?

⁵The spirits of dead people tremble with fear,

those who are under the waters

and everyone who dwells with them.

⁶God knows all about those who are in the place of the dead;

there is nothing down there that prevents God from seeing what is there.

⁷God stretches out heaven

over the empty spaces,

and he places the earth in that huge empty space, but it is not resting on anything.

⁸He fills the thick clouds with water

and prevents that water from bursting the clouds.

⁹He causes clouds to obscure the moon.

¹⁰He separates the light from the darkness

and puts the horizon to mark the place where the night ends and the daytime begins.

¹¹When he is angry, it is as though he rebuked the pillars that hold up the sky.

They are shocked, and they tremble.

¹²By his power he calmed the sea;

by his skill he destroyed Rahab, the huge sea monster.

¹³By his breath he caused the sky to be bright;

by his hand he killed the great dragon in the sea as it was fleeing from him.

¹⁴But those events show only a small amount of his power;
it is as though we were hearing only whispers of his powerful voice.
When we hear thunder, we say, 'Who can really understand how great his power is?'"

Chapter 27

¹Job continued speaking to his three friends:

²"Almighty God has refused to treat me justly.

He has caused me to feel bitter.

But just as surely as he lives,

³I will say this as long as God's Spirit enables me to breathe!

⁴I will not lie!

I will not say anything to deceive anyone.

⁵I will never admit that what you three have said is true;

until the day that I die, I will insist that I have not done things that are wrong.

⁶I will say that I am innocent, and I will never say anything different;

my inner being will never reproach me as long as I live.

⁷I want God to punish my enemies like he will punish all wicked people;

I want him to punish those who oppose me like he punishes all unrighteous people.

⁸When it is time for God to get rid of godless people and to cause them to die,

there is absolutely nothing good that they can confidently expect to happen to them.

⁹When they experience troubles, God will not hear them call out to him for help, will he?

¹⁰Will they be happy about what Almighty God does?

Will they begin to pray to him frequently?

Certainly not!

¹¹I will teach you three something about God's power;

I will reveal to you what he is thinking.

¹²You three have seen for yourselves powerful things that God has done;

so I do not understand why you have been saying such nonsense to me.

¹³I will tell you what Almighty God does to wicked people,

what he does to people who mistreat others.

¹⁴Even if they have many children, those children will die in wars,

or they will die because they do not have enough food to eat.

¹⁵Their children who are still alive after they themselves die will perish from diseases,
and the wives they leave behind will not even mourn for them.

¹⁶Sometimes wicked people accumulate a huge amount of silver
and pile up clothes as potters pile up clay,

¹⁷but those wicked people will die, and then righteous people will wear those clothes,
and honest people will get their silver and divide it among themselves.

¹⁸The houses that they build are as weak as spider webs;
they are like flimsy huts that watchmen live in while they guard people's fields.

¹⁹The wicked people are rich when they lie down at night,
but when they wake up in the morning, they find out that their money has disappeared.

²⁰Things that terrify them come to them like a flood that they do not expect;
during the night a whirlwind carries them away.

²¹It is as though the wind from the east had picked them up and carried them away from their homes,
and they disappear forever.

²²That wind strikes them without pitying them
while they are running away, trying to escape from its force.

²³That wind is like someone clapping his hands at them to mock them,
howling at them and forcing them to run away."

Chapter 28

¹"It is true that there are places where men dig to find silver,
and there are places where people refine gold that they have dug.

²People dig iron ore out of the ground,
and they also smelt copper.

³Men use lamps while they work far down under the ground
to search for the ore inside the mines
where it is very dark.

⁴They dig shafts in places that are far from where people live,
where travelers do not go.

They work far away from other people,

swinging back and forth on ropes as they descend into the mine shafts.

⁵Food grows on the surface of the ground,
but down under the ground, where there is no food, the miners make fires to break apart the rocks.

⁶The stones that are dug from under the ground contain sapphires,
and the dirt contains bits of gold.

⁷Some birds have very good eyes,
but even hawks do not know where the mines are,
and falcons have not seen those places.

⁸Lions or other proud wild animals have never gone to those places.

⁹Miners dig very hard rock;
it is as though they turned the mountains upside down to get the ore.

¹⁰They cut tunnels through the rocks,
and they find precious things.

¹¹They dam up small streams to stop the water from flowing,
and they bring up into the light things that are hidden in the ground and in the streams.

¹²But wisdom: Where can people find that?

Where can we find out how to truly understand things?

¹³Humans do not know what wisdom is truly worth;
no one can find it here on this earth where they are living.

¹⁴It is as though the water that is under the earth and water that is in the seas said,
'I do not have it!'

¹⁵People cannot buy wisdom
by paying for it with silver or gold.

¹⁶Wisdom is worth much more than fine gold from the land of Ophir,
much more than very valuable stones.

¹⁷It is worth much more than gold or beautiful quartz;
wisdom is more expensive than the finest jewels, and it is worth more than a vase made with pure gold.

¹⁸Wisdom is worth more than coral or crystal quartz;
the price of wisdom is higher than the price of rubies.

¹⁹The prices of topaz from Ethiopia and of pure gold
are lower than the value of wisdom.

²⁰So from where does wisdom come?

Where can we find out how to truly understand things?

²¹No living humans can see it;

and birds cannot see it while they are up in the sky.

²²It is as though the places where people go after they die said,

‘We have only heard rumors about where to find wisdom.’

²³God is the only one who knows how to find wisdom;

he knows where it is

²⁴because he can see things even in the most remote places on the earth;

he can see everything that is below the sky.

²⁵He decided how strongly the winds should blow,

and how much rain should be in the clouds.

²⁶He decided where rain should fall,

and what path lightning should take from the clouds down to the ground.

²⁷At that time he saw wisdom and decided that it is very valuable.

He examined it and approved it.

²⁸And then he said to human beings, ‘Listen! If you have much respect for me, you will be able to become wise; to truly understand everything, you must first turn away from doing what is evil.’”

Chapter 29

¹Job spoke again and said this:

²“I wish that I could be as I was previously
during the years when God took care of me.

³During those years, it was as though God’s lamp shone on me
and gave me light while I walked in the darkness.

⁴At that time I was young and strong,
and because God was my friend, he protected where I lived.

⁵Almighty God was with me during those years
when all my children were around me.

⁶My herds provided me with plenty of milk,
and streams of oil flowed from the rock where my servants pressed the olives.

⁷Whenever I went to the place where the elders gathered at the city gate,
I sat down with them,
⁸and when the young men saw me, they stepped aside respectfully,
and the old men also stood respectfully.
⁹The leaders of the people used to stop talking,
¹⁰and even the most important men became quiet
and stopped talking in order to hear me speak to them.
¹¹When they all heard what I told them,
they said good things about me.
When they saw me, they always praised me
¹²because I had helped those who were poor when they cried out for help,
and because I aided those who had no fathers, those who had no one else to help them.
¹³Those who were suffering and about to die praised me,
and I caused widows to sing joyfully, because I helped them.
¹⁴I always acted justly;
my actions were like a robe that I wore and like a turban that was wrapped around my head.
¹⁵It was as though I myself saw for blind people
and walked for people who were lame.
¹⁶I was like a father to the poor people,
and in the courts I defended those who were strangers to me.
¹⁷I made wicked people stop oppressing others; it was like someone who breaks the teeth of wild animals
and forces them to drop their victims from their teeth.
¹⁸At that time I thought, 'Surely I will live in peace until I am very old,
and I will die at home with my family.
¹⁹I am like a tree whose roots reach down into the water
and whose branches become wet with dew each night.
²⁰People always honor me,
and I am always strong like a new bow.'
²¹When I spoke, people waited to hear what I would say;
they remained silent until I advised them what they should do.
²²After I finished speaking, they did not say anymore;

it was as though my words fell on their ears like drops of rain.

²³They waited for me to speak as they wait for rain;

they liked what I said as farmers appreciate the final rain in the spring before the dry season.

²⁴When they were sad, I smiled at them to encourage them;

they became encouraged when they saw my cheerful face.

²⁵I was their leader, and I decided what things would be good for them to do;

I was among them like a king who is among his troops;

I was like someone who comforts others who are mourning.”

Chapter 30

¹“But now, men who are younger than I am make fun of me—

men whose fathers I greatly despised—

their fathers, whom I would not even have allowed to help my dogs guard my sheep.

²They were men who were old and weak;

what could I gain from having these men work for me, even when they thought they were strong?

³They were very poor and hungry,

so that they chewed on roots at night

in dry and desolate places.

⁴They pulled up plants in the desert and ate them;

they warmed themselves by burning the roots of broom trees.

⁵Everyone shouted at them, “Stop, thief!”

and drove them from their area.

⁶They were forced to live in riverbeds,

in holes in the ground, and in the sides of cliffs.

⁷In the bushes they howled like animals because they were hungry,

and they huddled together under thornbushes.

⁸They were people without good sense,

whose names no one knows;

they were driven out from the land where they were born.

⁹Now their children sing songs to make fun of me.

They tell jokes about me.

¹⁰They are disgusted with me, and they stay away from me,
but when they see me, they are happy to spit in my face.

¹¹It seems as though God had cut my bowstring and caused me to be unable to defend myself; he has humbled me,
and my enemies have done to me whatever they wanted.

¹²Gangs of these people attack me and force me to run away;
they prepare to destroy me.

¹³They prevent me from escaping,
and there is no one to keep them from attacking me.

¹⁴It is as though I were a city wall and they had broken through it,
as though they had come crashing down on me.

¹⁵I am very terrified;
my dignity has been blown away by the wind,
and my prosperity has disappeared as clouds disappear.

¹⁶Now I am about to die;
I suffer every day.

¹⁷My bones ache during the nights,
and the pain that torments me never stops.

¹⁸It is as though God had grabbed my clothes
and choked me by the collar of my coat.

¹⁹He has thrown me into the mud;
I am not worth anything more than dust and ashes.

²⁰I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer me;
I stand up and pray, but you do not pay any attention.

²¹You act very cruelly toward me;
with all of your power you cause me to suffer.

²²You allow the wind to lift me up and blow me away;
and you make a violent storm blow me around.

²³I know that you will cause me to die,
which is what happens to everyone who is alive.

²⁴When people experience disasters,

they sit on a pile of ruins and cry out for help;
they certainly cry out for help.

²⁵I myself wept for people who were experiencing troubles,
and I felt sorry for poor people.

²⁶However, when I expected good things to happen to me, evil things happened;
when I waited for light, I experienced darkness instead.

²⁷I am very distressed all the time;
I suffer every day.

²⁸I go about very discouraged;
I stand up and plead for people to help me.

²⁹My wailing is as sad as jackals and ostriches in the wilderness.

³⁰My skin has become dark and is peeling off,
and I have a fever which causes my body to feel as though it were burning up with a fever.

³¹Previously, I played joyful music on my harp and with my flute,
but now I play only the sad music of those who mourn."

Chapter 31

¹"I made to myself a solemn promise
that I would not look at a young woman and want to sleep with her.

²If I did not do what I promised,
what would God who is in heaven give me?
Almighty God would certainly not give me any reward!

³Previously I thought that surely it was unrighteous people who would experience calamities,
and that it was those who do what is wrong who would experience disasters.

⁴God certainly sees everything that I do,
so why is he causing me to suffer?
It is as though he were counting every step that I take.

⁵I solemnly declare that I have never acted wickedly
and have never tried to deceive people.

⁶I request only that God judge me fairly;
if he does that, he will know that I am innocent.

⁷If it were true that I had turned away from walking on the right paths,
or that I had seen wrong things to do and then did them,
or that my hands were stained because I had sinned,

⁸then I hope that when I plant seeds, someone else will harvest the crops and eat them,
and that others will uproot the crops that I have planted.

⁹If it is true that I have been attracted by some other man's wife,
or that I have hidden myself and waited outside the door to her house,

¹⁰I hope another man will sleep with my own wife
and that she will sleep with him.

¹¹For me to do that would be a terrible sin,
and the judges would decide that I should be punished.

¹²My adultery would produce in me a fire like the fire that burns people in hell,
and it would burn up everything that I own.

¹³If it is true that I have ever refused to listen to one of my male or female servants
when they complained to me about something,

¹⁴I hope that God would stand up and declare that he will punish me;
when he does that, what could I do?

If he asked me about what I have done, what would I answer?

¹⁵God, who created me, certainly also created my servants;
surely he is the one who formed them and me in our mothers' wombs,
so we all should behave toward each other in the same way.

¹⁶⁻¹⁸From the time I was young I have taken care of orphans; All my life I have never given the widowed mothers a
reason to lose hope.

So if it is true that I ate all my food myself and did not share some of it with orphans,
or that I refused to give poor people the things that they wanted,
or that I caused widows to live in despair, then you do to me whatever you must do to me.

¹⁹If I had seen people die from cold because they had no clothes,
or that I had seen poor people who did not have clothes to keep them warm,

²⁰and they were not able to become warm from clothes made from the wool of my sheep
and they thanked me for it,

²¹or if it is true that I threatened to strike any orphan

because I knew that the elders at the city gates would approve of me, then do to me whatever you must do to me.

²²For if those things were true about me, I hope that my shoulder blade would be torn out
and my arm be torn from my shoulder.

²³I always feared that God would cause me to experience a great disaster if I did any of those evil things,
and I would not have been able to endure the powerful things that he would do to punish me.

²⁴If it is true that I trusted in my gold,

²⁵or that I rejoiced because I had acquired many things
and had become very rich,

²⁶or that I looked at the sun when it was shining,
or that I looked at the beautiful moon,

²⁷and I had been tempted to worship them
by kissing my hand to honor them,

²⁸those things also would be sins for which the judges would say that I must be punished
because I would have been rejecting God by doing those things.

²⁹⁻³⁰It is not true that I sinned by requesting God to curse people who hated me
and to cause them to die because I was angry with them.

It is not true that I was glad when they were ruined
or that I rejoiced when they experienced disasters. No!

³¹⁻³²No one can truthfully say that I did not welcome travelers to stay in my house,
or that I did not open my doors to them, but that I forced them to sleep in the streets!
All the men who work for me certainly know that I have given food to anyone who needed it!

³³Some people try to hide their sins,
but I have never done that;

³⁴and I never remained silent and refused to go outside
because I was afraid of what people would say about me,
and that they would hate me.

³⁵I wish that there was someone who would hear what I am saying!
I solemnly declare that all that I have said is true.

I wish that those who oppose me would write down on a scroll the evil things that they say that I did.

³⁶If they did that, I would wear that scroll on my shoulder or on top of my head, in order that everyone could see it.

³⁷I would tell God everything that I have done,

and I would approach him like a ruler would, without being afraid.

³⁸If it is true that I have stolen land,

so that its furrows were like someone who shouted out to accuse me;

³⁹or that I have eaten the crops that grew in someone else's fields

without paying for those crops,

so that the farmers who grew those crops died from hunger;

⁴⁰then I wish that thorns would grow in my fields instead of wheat,

and that bad weeds would grow instead of barley!"

That is the end of what Job said to his three friends.

Chapter 32

¹Then those three men stopped replying to Job because they could not convince Job that he had done anything wrong. ²Then Elihu son of Barakel, a descendant of Buz, from the clan of Ram, became very angry at Job. He was angry because Job continued to claim that he was innocent, and that God had been wrong to punish him. ³He was also angry with Job's three friends because they had declared that Job must have done many things that were wrong, but they could not convince him. ⁴Now Elihu was younger than the others, so he waited until they had finished speaking before he replied to Job. ⁵But when Elihu realized that the three men had no more to say to Job, he became angry.

⁶This is what he said:

"I am young, and you all are much older than I am.

So I was timid, and I was afraid to tell you what I was thinking.

⁷I said to myself, 'Let those who are much older speak

because older people should be able to say things that are wise.'

⁸However, the Spirit of Almighty God is within people, and it is he who enables them to be wise.

⁹Not all people become wise when they are old;

not all old people understand what is right.

¹⁰That is why I say to you now, 'Listen to me,

and allow me to declare what I know.'

¹¹I waited for you all to speak;

I wanted to hear the wise things that you would say.

I waited while you thought carefully about what you should say.

¹²I paid attention carefully,

but surprisingly, none of you was able to prove that what Job said was wrong.

¹³So do not say to yourselves, 'We have discovered what is wise!'

It is God who must refute Job because you three have not been able to do that.

¹⁴Job was replying to you, not to me,

so I will not reply to him by saying what you three have said.

¹⁵I tell myself this: These three men are confused because they have nothing more to say to Job; they have nothing more to say to him.

¹⁶But because you do not speak, I certainly will not wait any longer; you merely stand there and do not reply anymore.

¹⁷So now I also will reply to Job and tell him what I know.

¹⁸I have plenty to say, and my spirit forces me to say it.

¹⁹My inner being is like a container of wine that is stretching more and more from the fermentation, and it will soon burst.

²⁰I must speak in order that I can rest from trying to hold in my words; I must say something to reply to you all.

²¹I will speak fairly, not favoring any of you, and I will not try to flatter anyone.

²²I really do not know how to flatter people; if I did that, God would soon destroy me."

Chapter 33

¹"Now, Job, listen carefully to all that I am going to say.

²I am ready to tell you what I think.

³In my inner being I know that I am speaking honestly and that I am speaking sincerely.

⁴Almighty God has created me as well as you, and with his breath he has caused me to live.

⁵So answer what I say if you can; think carefully what you will reply to me.

⁶God considers that you and I are both the same;
he formed both of us from clay.

⁷So you do not need to be afraid of me;
I will not speak against you harshly.

⁸I have heard you speak,
and this is what you have said:

⁹I am innocent, and I have not committed any sins;
I am pure, and I have not done things that are wrong.

¹⁰But God finds reasons to accuse me,
and he considers that I am his enemy.

¹¹It is as though he had put my feet in stocks,
and he watches everything that I do.'

¹²However, what you have said is wrong,
and I will tell you what you have said that is wrong.
God is much greater than any human.

¹³So, why are you arguing against God? He does not have to tell us why he does anything.

¹⁴God does, indeed, speak to us in various ways,
but we do not pay any attention to what he says.

¹⁵Sometimes he speaks to us at night in dreams and visions
when we are on our beds, heavily asleep.

¹⁶He reveals things to us in those times;
he terrifies us by warning us about things.

¹⁷He tells us those things in order that we may stop doing evil deeds
and to prevent us from becoming proud.

¹⁸He does not want us to be destroyed;
he wants to prevent us from dying while we are still young.

¹⁹God also corrects us by forcing us to lie on our beds, suffering much pain
and fever in our bones.

²⁰The result is that we do not desire any food,
not even very special food.

²¹Our bodies become very thin so that we look like a skeleton,

and our bones stick out so others can count them.

²²We know that we will soon die

and go to the place where dead people are.

²³Yet sometimes an angel may come to one of us,

one of the thousands of angels who come to intervene between us and God,
to tell us what are the right things for us to do.

²⁴The angel is kind to us and says to God,

'Please release that person,

so that he does not descend to the place where dead people are!

Do that because I have found a way for you to keep him from dying!

²⁵Please let his body be strong again;

please allow him to be strong like he was when he was young!"

²⁶If that happens, that person will pray to God, and God will accept him;

he will enter God's presence joyfully,

and then he will tell others how God saved him from dying.

²⁷He will sing as he says to everyone,

'I sinned, and I did things that were not right,

but God did not punish me in the way that I deserved.

²⁸He has saved me from dying and going to the place where dead people are,

and I will continue to enjoy being alive.'

²⁹God does all these things for us many times;

³⁰he preserves us from dying and going to the place where the dead are,

in order that we can continue to enjoy being alive.

³¹So Job, listen to me;

do not say anything more; just allow me to speak.

³²After I speak, if you have something more that you want to say to me,

say it, because I would like to find a way to declare that you are innocent.

³³However, if you have nothing more that you want to say, then just listen to me,

and I will teach you how to become wise."

Chapter 34

¹Then Elihu continued by saying this:

²"You men who think that you are very wise, listen to me;
listen to what I am saying, you men who say that you know so much.

³When we hear people talk,
we think carefully about what they say to know what is good and what is bad,
as we taste food to know what is good to eat.

⁴We must decide who is saying what is right,
and we must find out together for ourselves what is good.

⁵Job has said, 'I am innocent,
but God has refused to judge me fairly.

⁶Even though I have always done what is right,
he is lying about me.
Even though I have not done what is wrong,
he has caused me to suffer, and I will certainly die because of this.'

⁷Is there any person like Job, who insults others as easily as people accept a drink of water?

⁸He habitually associates with people who do what is evil
and spends time with wicked people.

⁹He certainly does these things, because he has said, 'It is useless for people to try to please God.'

¹⁰So, you men who claim that you understand everything, listen to me!
Almighty God would never consider doing anything that is wicked or wrong!

¹¹He pays back people for what they have done;
he gives them what they deserve for the way that they have conducted their lives.

¹²Truly, Almighty God never does what is wicked;
he never calls wrongdoing right.

¹³No one gave him the authority to rule everything on the earth;
no one put him in control of the whole world.
He has always had that authority.

¹⁴If he ever thought only about himself and not about us also, and if he ever stopped making us live,

¹⁵everyone would die immediately,

and their corpses would soon become soil again.

¹⁶So, Job, if you say that you understand everything,
listen to what I am saying.

¹⁷God could certainly never hate what is right and still rule the world.

So you really cannot criticize God, who is righteous and powerful, and you cannot say that what he has done is wrong, can you?

¹⁸He tells some kings that they are worthless,
and he says to some officials that they are wicked.

¹⁹He does not favor rulers more than he favors others;
he does not favor rich people more than poor people
because he created all of them.

²⁰They often die suddenly;
he strikes them at midnight and they die;
he gets rid of important people without the help of any humans.

²¹He sees everything that people do;
when we walk, he watches every step that we take.

²²There is no gloom or darkness
in which wicked people can hide from God.

²³God does not need to set a time
when we will stand in front of him in order that he may judge us.
He already knows everything about us.

²⁴He destroys important people without needing to investigate what they have done,
and he appoints others to take their places.

²⁵Because he already knows what they have done,
he removes them at night and gets rid of them.

²⁶He strikes them because of the wicked things that they have done;
many people see him do it.

²⁷He strikes them down because they turned away from doing what he wanted them to do
and did not pay attention to any of his commands.

²⁸They mistreated poor people;
those poor people cried out to God for help,

and he heard them.

²⁹Yet even if God decides to do nothing to punish wicked people,
no one can criticize him.

God controls all nations and all people.

³⁰He does this so that those who rule over us may honor him,
so that our rulers do not oppress us.

³¹Job, have you or anyone else ever said to God, 'I have certainly committed sin,
but I will not sin anymore;

³²so teach me what sins I have committed;
if I have done anything that is evil,
I will not do it anymore'?

³³Job, you object to what God has done to you,
but do you think that he will do what you want him to do?
It is you who must choose what you should say to God, not I;
tell me what you are thinking about this.

³⁴People who have good sense, those who are wise and who listen to what I say,
will say to me,

³⁵'Job is speaking ignorantly;
what he says is nonsense.'

³⁶To you friends of Job, I say this: I think that a court should thoroughly try Job,
because he answers us, his friends, as wicked men would answer.

³⁷To add to the other sins that he has committed, he is rebelling against God;
he shows us that he does not honor God;
he makes long speeches saying that God has punished him unjustly."

Chapter 35

¹Then Elihu also said this:

²"Job, do you really think that you have done nothing wrong?

You say, 'God knows that I am innocent,'

³and you also say, 'What good have I received for not sinning?

What benefit have I received that I would not have had, even if I had sinned?'

⁴Well, I will answer you,

and I will answer your three friends, too.

⁵Job, look up at the sky;

look at the clouds that are high above you

and realize that God is far above everything, entirely out of your reach.

⁶If you have sinned, that cannot harm God at all.

Even if you do wrong things many, many times, that certainly does not hurt him.

⁷In the same way, if you are righteous, does that help God?

No, nothing you do can help him.

⁸It is other people who can suffer because of the wicked things that you do;

In the same way, you might help others if you do good things for them.

⁹People cry out because of the many things that others do to make them suffer;

they call for help because of the things that powerful people do to them.

¹⁰But no one calls out to God

and says, 'Why does God, my creator, not help me?

He should enable me to sing joyful songs, instead of very sad songs, during the night.

¹¹He should be able to teach us more than he teaches the wild animals;

he should enable us to become wiser than all the birds are!

¹²People cry out for help,

but God does not answer them

because those who cry out are proud and evil people.

¹³It is useless for them to cry out

because God, the Almighty One, does not pay any attention to what they say.

¹⁴So when you complain that you cannot see God,

and you tell him that you are waiting for him to decide whether or not you have done wrong,

he will not listen to you, either!

¹⁵Furthermore, you say that because he does not pay attention when people commit sins,

he does not become angry and punish them.

¹⁶My friends, you see that Job has said things that are completely useless,

that he says many things without knowing what in the world he is talking about."

Chapter 36

¹Elihu finished speaking by saying this:

²"Job, be patient with me a little longer

because I have something else to teach you.

I have something else to say in order to prove that God does no wrong.

³I will tell you what I have learned from many sources,

in order to show that God, my creator, is just.

⁴I will not say anything to you that is false;

I, who am standing in front of you, am someone who understands things very well.

⁵Really, God is very powerful, and he does not despise anyone,

and he understands everything.

⁶He does not allow wicked people to remain alive—contrary to what you have claimed,

and he always acts justly toward those who are suffering.

⁷He always watches over those who are righteous;

he makes them prosper, as if they were kings,

and he causes others to honor them forever.

⁸However, if people who commit crimes are caught,

or if they suffer in prison for having done wrong,

⁹then God shows them what they have done;

he shows them the sins that they have committed,

and he shows them that they have been arrogant.

¹⁰He causes them to listen to what he is warning them,

and he commands them to turn away from doing what is evil.

¹¹If they listen to him and serve him,

they will prosper and be happy for all the years that they continue to live.

¹²But if they do not listen to him,

they will die violently

because they understand nothing about God and what he wants them to do.

¹³People who fail to honor God continue being angry,

and they do not cry out for help

even when God is punishing them.

¹⁴They die while they are still young,
disgraced because of their immoral behavior.

¹⁵God actually rescues people by causing them to suffer;
by afflicting them, he causes them to listen to what he is telling them.

¹⁶Job, I think that God wants to bring you out of your troubles
and allow you to live without distress;
he wants your table to be full of very nice food.

¹⁷However, now he is punishing you as he would punish the wicked;
God has judged you very rightly.

¹⁸Do not let your anger give you an excuse to mock other people,
and do not let a large amount of money paid as a bribe
compel you to ruin your life.

¹⁹If that happens, it certainly will not help you to cry out when you are distressed;
none of your strength will help you in that case.

²⁰Do not wish that it would be nighttime in order that you might mistreat others without anyone knowing it;
night is the time when even entire people groups are destroyed!

²¹Be careful not to begin doing evil deeds,
because God has caused you to suffer to prevent you from doing evil.

²²Truly, people praise God because he is so powerful;
there is certainly no teacher who teaches what he teaches.

²³No one has told him what he should do,
and no one has said to him, 'You have done what is wrong!'

²⁴People have always sung songs to praise him,
so you also should never forget to praise him for what he has done.

²⁵All people have seen what he has done,
but we understand those things only a little.

²⁶How great God is! We are not able to know how great he is,
and we do not understand how old he is.

²⁷He draws water up from the earth and puts it in clouds
and causes it to become rain;

²⁸the rain pours down from the sky
and causes abundant showers to fall on everyone.

²⁹No one can understand how the clouds move across the sky
or how it thunders in the sky where God lives.

³⁰He causes lightning to flash all around him,
but he causes the oceans to remain dark.

³¹By providing plenty of rain for everyone,
he gives them abundant food.

³²It is as though he were holding the lightning in his hands,
and then he commands it to strike where he wants it to.

³³When we hear his thunder, we know that there will be a storm,
and the cattle know it, too.

Chapter 37

¹"My heart pounds when I think about that.

²Listen, all of you, to the thunder,
which is like God's voice.

³He sends thunder all across the sky,
and he sends lightning to the most distant places on the earth.

⁴After the lightning flashes, we hear the thunder,
which is like God's powerful voice;
when he speaks, he does not keep back the lightning.

⁵When God speaks, it causes us to fear him and admire him, as thunder does;
he does amazing things that we cannot understand.

⁶He commands the snow to fall on the ground,
and often he makes it rain very hard.

⁷When God does that, it prevents people from working,
in order that all people may know that he is the one who does these things.

⁸When it rains, the animals go into their hiding places,
and they stay there until the rain stops.

⁹The storms come from the place in the south where they start,

and the cold winds come from the north.

¹⁰In the winter water freezes when he commands it,
and the lakes become ice.

¹¹God fills the clouds with moisture,
and lightning flashes everywhere from the clouds.

¹²He guides the clouds and causes them to move back and forth
in order that they may accomplish all that he commands them to do all over the world.

¹³Sometimes God sends rain to punish us, sometimes to water the land that he has made,
and sometimes because he wants to be very kind to us.

¹⁴Job, listen to this;
stop and think about the wonderful things that God does.

¹⁵Do you know how God commands the lightning to flash down from his clouds?

¹⁶Do you know how God decides where to place the clouds in the sky?

Can you understand all the wonderful things that God does,
and how he knows everything and he knows them completely?

¹⁷No, you just sweat there in your hot clothing
because even the clothes you wear become very hot.
Your clothing becomes hot because the heat builds up
when the wind comes from the south.

¹⁸Can you stretch out the skies like God does and make them as hard as a metal mirror?

¹⁹Job, you know so much! So tell us what we should say to God;
we do not know anything about how we should defend ourselves.

²⁰Should I ask someone to tell God that I want to speak to him?
No, because if I did that, he might destroy me.

²¹You know that people cannot look directly at the sun
when it shines brightly in the sky after the wind has blown the clouds away;
likewise we certainly cannot look at the brightness of God.

²²God comes out of the north with a light that shines like gold;
his glory causes us to be afraid.

²³Almighty God has very great power,
and we do not know how to go near to him.

He always acts righteously,
and he will never mistreat us.

²⁴That is the reason that we have an awesome respect for him;
he does not pay attention to those who proudly, but wrongly, think that they are wise.”

Chapter 38

¹Then Yahweh spoke to Job from inside a powerful storm. He said to him,

²“Who are you to bring confusion to what I plan to do?

You are speaking ignorantly!

³I want to ask you some questions,

so act like a man and

get ready to answer my questions.

⁴Where were you when I started to create the earth?

Since you know so much, tell me where you were at that time.

⁵If it was not I who decided how large the earth would be, then who decided?

Do you know who stretched a line around the earth to measure it?

Since you think that you know so much, you should surely know that!

⁶⁻⁷What supports the pillars on which the earth rests?

When the stars that shine early in the morning sang together,

and someone put in place the stone that causes the earth to stay in its place,

and all the angels shouted joyfully when they saw that happen,

who laid that cornerstone?

⁸When the seas poured out from under the earth,

who prevented the water from flooding over the land?

⁹It was I, not you, who caused clouds to come over the seas

and caused it to become very dark under those clouds.

¹⁰I set limits for the seas,

and I put barriers so that the water would not come over the land.

¹¹I pointed to the shore and said to the water,

‘I permit you to come up to here, but I do not permit you to come any farther.

Your powerful waves must stop here!’

¹²Job, have you ever commanded the morning to begin?

Have you ever told the sun to start rising and begin a new day?

¹³Have you ever told the dawn to spread out over the whole earth
with the result that wicked people run away from the light?

¹⁴When it becomes light after the dawn,
the hills and the valleys become clear like a seal gives an image to the clay under it, or like the folds in a cloth.

¹⁵When it becomes daylight, the wicked do not have the darkness that they like;
in the daylight they no longer are able to hurt anyone.

¹⁶Job, have you traveled to the springs in the bottom of the ocean from which the water in the seas comes?
Have you investigated the very bottom of the oceans?

¹⁷Has someone shown you the gates to the place where dead people are,
the gates to the place where it is very dark among those who are dead?

¹⁸Do you know how big the earth is?
Tell me, if you know all these things!

¹⁹Where is the road to the place where light comes from?
Can you tell me where darkness lives?

²⁰Can you take the light and the darkness to the places where they must do their work every day?
Do you know where the road is that goes back to their homes?

²¹I am sure that you know these things
because you were born before the time when all things were created;
you must be very old!

²²Have you entered the place where I store the snow
and the place where I keep the hail?

²³I store the snow and the hail in order that I can use them when people are fighting on earth,
in times when they are fighting wars.

²⁴Where is the road to the place from which I cause the lightning to flash?
Where is the place from where the east wind begins to blow over all the earth?

²⁵Who created the channels in which the rain comes down from the sky?
Who makes the roads for the thunder in the air?

²⁶Who causes rain to fall in the desert,
in places where no one lives?

²⁷Who sends the rain that gives moisture to barren areas, areas where nothing has grown,
so that grass begins to grow again?

²⁸Does the rain have a father?

Does the dew also have a father?

²⁹From whose womb does ice come in the winter?

Who gives birth to the frost that comes down from the sky?

³⁰In the winter, the water freezes and becomes as hard as a rock,
and the surface of lakes becomes frozen.

³¹Job, can you fasten the chains that hold the stars together in the cluster of the Pleiades stars?

Can you unfasten the cords of the stars in Orion? ³²Can you tell the stars and planets when they should shine?

Can you guide the stars in the groups of the Big Bear and the Little Bear?

³³Do you know the laws that the stars must obey?

Can you cause those same laws to rule everything here on the earth?

³⁴Can you shout commands up to the clouds and make rain pour down on you?

³⁵Can you cause flashes of lightning to come down and strike where you want them to strike?

Do those flashes say to you, 'Where do you want us to strike?'

³⁶Who enables the clouds to know when they should cause rain to fall?

³⁷Who is skilled enough to be able to count the clouds?

Who can tilt the containers of water in the sky to cause the rain to fall

³⁸so that the dry ground becomes hard

as the dry clods become wet and stick together?

³⁹⁻⁴⁰When a lioness and her cubs crouch in their dens or hide in a thicket, waiting for some animal to pass by that they can kill,

can you find animals for the lioness to kill

so that she and her cubs can eat the meat and not be hungry anymore?

⁴¹Who provides dead animals for the raven,

when its young are calling out to me for food,

when they are so weak because of their lack of food that they stagger around in their nests?

Chapter 39

¹"Job, do you know at what time of the year the female mountain goats give birth?

Have you watched the wild deer while their calves were being born?

²Do you know how many months pass from the time they become pregnant until their calves are born?

³When they give birth, they crouch down,
and then their labor pangs are done.

⁴The young calves grow up in the open fields,
and then they leave their mothers and do not return to them again.

⁵Who allows the wild donkeys to go wherever they want away from the cities?

⁶I am the one who has freed them and put them in the desert plain,
in places where grass does not grow.

⁷They do not like the noise in the cities;
in the desert they do not have to listen to the shouts of those who forced them to work.

⁸They go over the hills to find food;
there they search for grass to eat.

⁹Will a wild ox agree to work for you?
Will it allow you to keep it penned up at night in the place where you put feed for your animals?

¹⁰Can you fasten a rope on it
so that it will plow furrows in your fields, your fields in the valley?

¹¹Since it is very strong, can you for that reason trust it to work for you?
Can you go away after you tell it what work it should do and assume that it will do that work?

¹²Can you rely on it to come back from the field
bringing your grain to the place where you thresh it?

¹³Think also about the ostriches. They joyfully flap their wings,
but they have no love for their own young.

¹⁴Ostriches lay their eggs on top of the ground and then walk away,
leaving the eggs to be warmed in the sand.

¹⁵Ostriches never think about the possibility that some wild animal may step on the eggs and crush them.

¹⁶Ostriches act cruelly toward their chicks;
they act as though the chicks belonged to some other ostrich.
They are not concerned if their chicks die,
that they may have laid their eggs for nothing.

¹⁷That is because I did not allow ostriches to be wise.

I did not enable them to be intelligent.

¹⁸However, when they get up and begin to run,
they scornfully laugh at horses with their riders
because the horses cannot run as fast as the ostriches!

¹⁹Also, think about horses. Job, are you the one who made the horses to be strong?
Are you the one who put flowing manes on their necks?

²⁰Are you the one who enabled them to leap forward like locusts?
When they snort, they cause people to be afraid.

²¹They paw the ground, rejoicing because they are very strong,
as they prepare to rush into battle.

²²It is as if they were laughing at the thought of being afraid. They are not afraid of anything!
They do not run away when the soldiers in the battle are fighting each other with swords.

²³The quivers containing the riders' arrows rattle against the horses' sides,
and the spears and javelins flash in the light of the sun.

²⁴The horses run very quickly, and they speedily cover the ground;
they rush into battle as soon as the trumpet is blown.

²⁵They neigh joyfully when they hear someone blowing the trumpet.
They can smell a battle even when they are far away,
and they understand what it means when the commanders shout their commands to their soldiers.

²⁶Think about big birds. Are you the one who enabled hawks to spread their wings
and fly to the south for the winter?

²⁷Do eagles fly high up into the cliffs to make their nests
because you commanded them to do that?

²⁸They live in holes in those cliffs.
They are safe in those high pointed rocks because no animals can reach them there.

²⁹As they watch carefully from there,
they see animals far away that they can kill.

³⁰After an eagle kills an animal,
the baby eagles drink the blood of that animal;
they gather wherever there are dead people lying on the ground."

Chapter 40

¹Then Yahweh said to Job,

²"Do you still want to argue with me, the Almighty One?

Since you criticize me, you should be able to answer my questions!"

³Then Job replied to Yahweh,

⁴"Now I realize that I am completely worthless. So how could I answer those questions?

I will put my hand over my mouth and not say anything.

⁵I have already said more than I should have said,

so now I will say nothing more."

⁶Then Yahweh again spoke to Job from inside a powerful storm. He said,

⁷"I want to ask you some questions,

so act like a man and

get ready to answer my questions.

⁸Are you going to accuse me and say that I am unjust?

Are you going to say that what I have done is wrong, in order that you can say that what you have done is right?

⁹Do you have the same amount of power as I do?

Can your voice sound as loud as thunder, as mine can?

¹⁰If you can do that, then put on the robes

that show that you are glorious and are greatly honored!

¹¹Show that you are very angry;

show that you have the right to humble people who are very proud!

¹²Humble those proud people just by looking at them angrily!

Crush wicked people quickly!

¹³Bury them in the ground!

Send them to the place where dead people are,

where they will not be able to get out!

¹⁴If you do that, I will congratulate you

and say that truly you can save yourself by your own ability.

¹⁵Think also about hippopotamuses.

I made you, and I made them also.

They eat grass, like oxen do.

¹⁶Their legs are very strong,
and the muscles of their bellies are very powerful.

¹⁷Their tails are stiff like the branches of a cedar tree.

The muscles of their thighs are close together.

¹⁸Their thigh bones are like tubes made of bronze,
and the bones of their legs are like bars made of iron.

¹⁹Hippopotamuses are among the strongest of the animals that I made,
and I, who created them, am the only one who can kill them.

²⁰On the hills grows food for them to eat
while many other wild animals play nearby.

²¹They lie down in the water under the lotus plants;
they hide in tall reeds in the swamps.

²²The hippopotamuses find shade under the lotus plants,
and they are surrounded by willow trees growing in the streams.

²³They are not disturbed by raging, flooding rivers;
they are not even disturbed when rivers like the Jordan River rush over them.

²⁴No one can catch them with hooks
or by piercing their noses with the teeth of a trap!

Chapter 41

¹"Think also about crocodiles.

Can you catch them with a fishhook
or fasten their jaws with a rope?

²Can you put ropes through their noses to control them
or thrust hooks through their jaws?

³Will they plead with you to act mercifully toward them
or use sweet talk in order that you will not harm them?

⁴Will they make an agreement with you to work for you,
to be your slaves as long as they live?

⁵Can you make them into pets like you do birds?

Can you put a leash around their necks so that your servant girls can play with them?

⁶Will men who partner in selling fish try to sell them in the market?

Will they cut a crocodile up into pieces and sell the meat?

⁷Can you pierce crocodiles through their hides by throwing fishing spears at them?

Can you pierce their heads with a harpoon?

⁸If you grab one of them with your hands, it will give you a battle that you will never forget,
and you will never try to do it again!

⁹It is useless to even hope to subdue them.

Anyone who tries to subdue one of them will fall to the ground out of fear.

¹⁰No one dares to make a crocodile angry.

So, since I am much more powerful than they are, who would dare to cause me to be angry?

¹¹Also, everything on the earth is mine.

Therefore, no one is able to give anything to me and require me to pay money for it!

¹²I will tell you about how strong crocodiles' legs are
and how strong their well formed bodies are.

¹³Can anyone strip off their hides?

Can anyone pierce through their double layer of armor?

¹⁴Can anyone pry open their jaws, which have terrible teeth in them?

¹⁵They have rows of scales on their back
which are as hard as rock.

¹⁶The scales are very close together;
not even air can get between them.

¹⁷The scales are joined very closely to each other,
and they cannot be separated.

¹⁸When crocodiles sneeze, the tiny drops of water that come out of their noses sparkle in the sunlight.
Their eyes are red like the rising sun.

¹⁹It is as though sparks of fire poured out of their mouths.

²⁰Smoke pours out of their nostrils
as steam comes out of a pot that is put over a very, very hot fire.

²¹Their breath can cause coals to blaze
and flames to shoot out from their mouths.

²²Their necks are very strong;
wherever they go, they make people very afraid.

²³The folds in their flesh are very close together
and are very hard.

²⁴They are fearless
because the inner parts of their bodies are as hard as a rock,
as hard as the lower millstone on which people grind grain.

²⁵When they rise up, they cause even very strong people to be terrified.
As a result, people fall back.

²⁶People cannot injure them with swords;
spears, arrows, or other weapons with sharp points cannot injure them, either.

²⁷They certainly are not afraid of weapons made of straw or rotten wood,
but they are not even afraid of weapons made of iron or bronze!

²⁸Shooting arrows at them does not cause them to run away.
Hurling stones at them from a sling is like hurling bits of chaff at them.

²⁹They are not afraid of clubs anymore than they would be afraid of men throwing bits of straw at them,
and they laugh when they hear a spear coming at them.

³⁰Their bellies are covered with scales that are as sharp as broken pieces of pottery.
When they drag themselves through the mud,
their bellies tear up the ground like a plow.

³¹They stir up the water and cause it to foam
as they churn through it.

³²As they go through the water, their wakes glisten.
People who see it would think that the foam had become white hair.

³³There are no creatures on earth that I have created as fearless as crocodiles.

³⁴They are the proudest of all the creatures;
they are like kings over all the other wild animals."

Chapter 42

¹Then Job replied to Yahweh. He said,

²"I know that you can do everything

and that no one can stop you from doing what you want to do.

³You asked me, 'Who are you to bring confusion to what I plan to do? You are speaking ignorantly!'

It is true that I spoke about things that I did not understand,

things that are very amazing,

things about which I know nothing.

⁴You said to me, 'Listen while I talk to you.

I want to ask you some questions,

so prepare yourself to answer them.'

⁵I had heard about you previously by rumor,

but now it is as though I have seen you with my own eyes.

⁶Therefore I am ashamed of what I said,

and I sit in dust and ashes to show that I am sorry for what I said."

⁷After Yahweh said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz, "I am angry with you and your two friends, Bildad and Zophar, because you did not say true things about me, as my servant Job did. ⁸So now you must take to Job seven young bulls and seven rams and kill them and burn them on the altar as a sacrifice for yourselves. Then Job will pray for you, and I will do what he requests me to do. I will forgive you for speaking wrongly about me. I will not punish you, even though you deserve to be punished, because what you said about me was not right."

⁹So Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar did what Yahweh commanded them to do, and Yahweh did what Job requested him to do for the three of them.

¹⁰After Job prayed for his three friends, Yahweh healed him and caused him to become rich again. Yahweh gave him twice as many things as he had before. ¹¹Then all his brothers and sisters, and all the people who had known him before, came to his house, and they had a feast together. They consoled him because of all the troubles that Yahweh had allowed to happen to him. Each of them gave Job a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹²Then Yahweh blessed Job in the second half of his life more than he had blessed him in the first half of his life. He now acquired fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. ¹³And he also had seven more sons and three more daughters. ¹⁴He named the first daughter Jemimah, he named the second daughter Keziah, and he named the third daughter Keren Happuch. ¹⁵In all of the land of Uz, there were no young women who were as beautiful as the daughters of Job, and Job declared that they would inherit some of his possessions, just as their brothers would inherit some.

¹⁶After that, Job lived 140 more years. Before he died, he saw his great-great-grandchildren. ¹⁷He was very old when he died.

Psalms

Book One

Psalm 1

¹How fortunate are those who do not do what the wicked people advise them to do,
who do not imitate the behavior of sinful people,
and who do not join with people who ridicule God.

²Instead, those with whom Yahweh is pleased delight in understanding what he teaches us.
They read and think every day and every night about what Yahweh teaches.

³They constantly do things that please God,
just as fruit trees that have been planted along the banks of a stream produce fruit at the right time every year.
Like trees that never wither,
they succeed in everything that they do.

⁴But wicked people are not like that!
Wicked people are as worthless as chaff
that is blown away by the wind.

⁵Therefore, when God judges all mankind, he will condemn the wicked.
Furthermore, the wicked will not be present when Yahweh gathers all the righteous people together.

⁶For Yahweh guides and protects righteous people,
but the path that the wicked walk on leads them to where God will destroy them forever.

Psalm 2

¹Why do the leaders of nations rage against Yahweh?
Why do people plan to rebel against him, even though it is in vain?

²The kings of the nations on earth prepare to revolt;
the rulers plot together to fight against Yahweh and against his Anointed One.

³They shout, "We should free ourselves from their control;
we should not let them rule over us any longer!"

⁴But the one who sits on his throne in heaven laughs at them;

the Lord ridicules those rulers.

⁵Then, because he is angry with them, he rebukes them.

He causes them to be terrified when they realize that he will furiously punish them.

⁶Yahweh says, "I have put my king on a throne on Zion, my sacred hill in Jerusalem."

⁷His king says, "I will proclaim what Yahweh has decreed.

He said to me, 'You are my son;

today I have become your father.

⁸Request me to give you the nations

so that they belong to you permanently,

and I will give them to you.

Even the most remote nations will be yours.

⁹You will strike them down with an iron rod;

like the potter crashes his pot into pieces when he throws it on the ground,

that is how you will break them up into small pieces.

¹⁰So then, you kings and other rulers on the earth, act wisely!

Listen to what Yahweh is warning you!

¹¹Worship Yahweh; fervently honor him.

Rejoice about the things he has done, but tremble before him!

¹²Bow down humbly before his son!

If you do not do that, he will be angry,

and he will suddenly kill you.

Do not forget that he can, in one moment, show that he is very angry!

But how fortunate are all those who request him to protect them.

Psalm 3

A psalm written by David when he was fleeing from his son Absalom ¹Yahweh, I have many enemies!

There are many people who oppose me.

²Many people are saying about me,

"God will certainly not help him."

³But Yahweh, you are like a shield that protects me.

You greatly honor me, and you encourage me.

⁴I cry out to you, Yahweh,
and you answer me from Zion, your sacred hill.

⁵At night I lay down and slept, and I woke up in the morning
because you, Yahweh, took care of me all during the night.

⁶There may be thousands of enemy soldiers who surround me,
but I am not afraid.

⁷Yahweh, arise!
My God, come and rescue me again!
You will insult my enemies by slapping them on their cheeks;
when you strike them, you will destroy their power,
with the result that they cannot hurt anyone.

⁸Yahweh, you are the one who saves your people from their enemies.
Yahweh, bless your people!

Psalm 4

A psalm written by David for the choir director; a psalm to be accompanied by people playing stringed instruments

¹God, answer me when I pray to you.
You are the one who shows people that I am right to trust in you.
You rescued me when I was in great trouble.
Act mercifully toward me and listen to me while I pray.

²How long will you people shame me instead of honoring me?
You people love to falsely accuse me.

³All those who honor Yahweh—
he has chosen them to belong to him.
Yahweh will listen to me when I pray to him.

⁴You should be afraid of Yahweh, but do not allow your fear to cause you to sin.
While you lie on your bed,
silently examine what you are thinking in your inner being.

⁵Also, offer to Yahweh the proper sacrifices
and continue trusting in him.

⁶Some people ask, "Will someone please bring good things to us?"

But I say, "Yahweh, continue to act kindly toward us.

⁷You have caused me to be very happy;

I am happier than people who have harvested a great amount of grain and grapes.

⁸It is in peace and security that I will lie down at night and sleep soundly

because I know that it is only you, Yahweh, who will keep me safe."

Psalm 5

A psalm written by David for the choir director; a psalm to be accompanied by playing flutes

¹Yahweh, listen to me while I pray!

Pay attention to me when I am groaning because I am suffering very much.

²You are my king and my God.

When I call to you to request you to help me, listen to me

because you are the one to whom I pray.

³You listen to me when I pray to you each morning,

and I wait for you to reply.

⁴You are not a god who is pleased with wicked people;

you will never welcome those who do what is evil.

⁵You do not allow those who are proud to come to you to worship you.

You hate all those who do evil things.

⁶You get rid of liars,

and you despise those who murder others and those who deceive others.

⁷Yahweh, because you greatly and faithfully love me,

I come into your temple.

I have an awesome respect for you

and I will bow down to worship you at your sacred temple.

⁸Yahweh, because you act righteously toward me,

show me what is right for me to do.

Because I have many enemies,

show me clearly how to live in the right way.

⁹My enemies never say what is true;

in their inner beings they want to destroy others.

They speak threats of violence and death.

They use their tongues to say good things to please people.

¹⁰O God, declare that they are guilty and punish them.

Cause them to experience the same disasters that they plan to cause to happen to others.

Get rid of them because they have committed many sins,
and they have rebelled against you.

¹¹But cause that all those who go to you to be protected will rejoice;

cause them to sing joyfully to you forever.

Protect those who love you;

they are truly happy because of what you do for them.

¹²Yahweh, you always bless those who act righteously;

you protect them as a soldier protects himself with his shield.

Psalm 6

A psalm written by David for the choir leader, to be accompanied by people playing stringed instruments

¹Yahweh, do not correct me when you are angry with me;

do not punish me when you are upset.

²Yahweh, act kindly toward me and heal me because I have become weak.

My body shakes because I am experiencing so much sorrow.

³Yahweh, I am greatly troubled in my inner being.

How long must I endure this?

⁴Yahweh, please come and rescue me.

Save me because you always keep the promises of your covenant.

⁵I will not be able to praise you after I die;

no one in the place where the dead are praise you.

⁶I am exhausted because of my pain.

I cry all night long so that my bed and my pillow are drenched by my tears.

⁷Because I cry so much, I cannot see well.

My eyes have become weak because I constantly cry in fear of my enemies.

⁸You people who do evil things, get away from me,

because Yahweh heard me when I was crying!

⁹Yahweh heard me when I called out for him to help me,
and he will answer my prayer.

¹⁰When that happens, all my enemies will be ashamed;
they will be the ones who are terrified.
They will turn away from me and suddenly leave me
because they will be disgraced.

Psalm 7

A psalm that David sang to Yahweh because of a Benjamite named Cush.

¹Yahweh my God, I come to you to protect me.
Rescue me, save me from all those who are pursuing me in order to harm me.

²If you do not do that, they will tear me into pieces
like a lion does when it attacks the animals it wants to kill;
no one will save me from them.

³Yahweh my God, suppose that I have done anything that is wrong,
⁴or that I have done evil to some friend,
or that, for no good reason, I have harmed my enemies.

⁵Then allow my enemies to pursue me and capture me.
Allow them to trample me into the ground
and leave me lying dead in the dirt.

⁶Yahweh, because you are very angry with those who pursue me,
arise and attack the ones attacking me!
Do to them what you have said is just!

⁷The people of all nations gather around you to attack you,
but you will rule them from where you are in heaven.

⁸Yahweh, judge the people of all nations!
Yahweh, show that I have done nothing wrong.

⁹God, you know what every person is thinking in his inner being
and because you are righteous, you always do what is just.
So now stop evil people from doing wicked deeds,
and defend all of us who are righteous!

¹⁰God, you protect me as a shield protects soldiers;
you rescue all those who are righteous in their inner being.

¹¹You judge everyone correctly,
and every day you punish wicked people who insult your law.

¹²Whenever your enemies do not repent,
it is as though you sharpen your sword and put a string on your bow to get ready to kill them.

¹³You are preparing your weapons to kill those whom you strike;
the arrows that you will shoot have flaming tips.

¹⁴Wicked people plot their lies and evil things,
they plan and take delight in their thoughts like a pregnant woman who is planning to give birth.

¹⁵But when they dig a deep pit to trap others,
they themselves will fall into it.

¹⁶They themselves will experience the trouble that they want to cause others to have;
they will hurt themselves by the violent things that they want to do to others.

¹⁷I praise Yahweh because he always acts righteously;
I sing to praise Yahweh, the one who is much greater than any other god.

Psalm 8

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument

¹Yahweh our Lord, people all over the world know that you are very great!
We see your greatness every time we look toward the heavens!

²You have taught little children and infants to praise you;
they cause your enemies and those who try to get revenge on you to be silent.

³I look up at the sky at night
and see the things that you have made—
the moon and the stars that you have set in place.

⁴It is amazing to me that you think about people,
that you are concerned about us humans!

⁵You made the angels in heaven to be only a little more important than we are;
you caused us to be like kings!

⁶You put us in charge of everything that you made;

you gave us authority over all things—
⁷the sheep and the cattle,
and even the wild animals,
⁸the birds, the fish,
and everything else that swims in the seas.
⁹Yahweh our Lord,
people all over the world know that you are very great!

Psalm 9

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be sung using the tune 'The death of my son'

¹Yahweh, I will praise you with all of my inner being.
I will tell others about all the wonderful things that you have done.
²I will sing to celebrate what you, who are much greater than all other gods, have done.
³When my enemies realize that you are very powerful,
they stumble, and then they are killed.
⁴You sit on your throne to judge people,
and you have judged fairly concerning me.
⁵You rebuked the people of other nations,
and you have gotten rid of the wicked people;
you have erased their names forever.
⁶Our enemies have disappeared;
you destroyed their cities,
and people do not even remember them anymore.
⁷But Yahweh rules forever.
He judges people while he sits on his throne.
⁸He will judge all the people in the world justly;
he will be fair when he judges the people of every nation.
⁹Yahweh will be a refuge for those who are oppressed;
he will be like a shelter for them when they have trouble.
¹⁰Those who know Yahweh trust in him;
he never abandons those who come to him for help.

¹¹Yahweh rules on Mount Zion;

praise him and sing to him.

Tell the people of all the nations the marvelous things that he has done.

¹²He does not forget to punish those who have murdered others;

he will punish them,

and he will not ignore people who are crying because they are suffering.

¹³Yahweh, act mercifully toward me!

Look at the ways that my enemies have injured me.

Do not allow me to die because of these injuries.

¹⁴I want to live in order that I can praise you at the gates of Jerusalem

and to rejoice because you rescued me.

¹⁵It is as though the wicked people of many nations have dug a pit for me to fall into,

but they have fallen into that same pit.

It is as though they have spread out a net to catch me,

but their feet have been caught in that same net.

¹⁶Because of what you have done, people know that you make justice happen;

you allow wicked people to be trapped by the same evil things that they themselves do.

¹⁷Wicked people will all die and be buried in their graves;

their spirits will go to be with all those who have forgotten about you.

¹⁸But you will not forget those who are needy;

what they confidently expect will never be in vain.

¹⁹Yahweh, do not allow our enemies to conquer us

just because they are strong;

You see what the people do and you bring justice to them all.

²⁰Yahweh, teach them that they must be afraid of you and honor you.

Cause them to know that they are only human beings.

Psalm 10

¹Yahweh, why do you keep yourself far away from us?

Why do you not pay attention when we have troubles?

²Proud, wicked people, have a terrible desire within them to make poor people suffer.

God, make them fall into their own traps, so that what they did to others may be done to them!

³The wicked person boasts about the evil things he wants to do.

He desires to own the things that others have, and he does not want them to own more things than he has.

He boasts about all the things he owns, while he curses you, Yahweh.

⁴The wicked person is so proud

he never looks for God

and if he did look for God, he would not find him.

He is too proud to even think about God.

⁵But, looking at the life of the wicked man,

it seems that everything he does is successful.

He cannot even understand your commands, God,

and then he mocks his enemies.

⁶In his mind he thinks, "Nothing bad can happen to me!

As long as I live, I will never have troubles."

⁷When he speaks he always curses and tells lies,

and he makes threats against others.

When he talks, he only speaks about hurting or destroying other people.

⁸He makes plans to attack the people living in the villages, people who have done nothing wrong.

He waits in places where he can hide

while he keeps looking for more people he can attack,

people who cannot defend themselves.

⁹He waits for his victims like a lion who crouches down,

and just like the lion, he hides in the bushes.

He is like the hunter who spreads out the net

so he can catch helpless people and drag them away.

¹⁰The helpless people are crushed by the wicked person's plans

and all the things he does.

He is powerful, and when he opposes the helpless people,

he always takes away from them whatever he wants.

¹¹The wicked person says, "God cannot remember what I did.

His eyes are covered, and he cannot see anything that I have done."

¹²Yahweh, arise! God, strike him down!

Do not forget those who are suffering!

¹³Why does the most wicked person curse you, God, and turn away from you?

Does he think, "God can never punish me"?

¹⁴God, you do see the trouble and the distress that the wicked person causes.

And you will strike the wicked man and punish him for all that he does.

¹⁵God, destroy the power of the person who is wicked and evil!

Make him pay for those evil things he did,

those things that he thought God would not find out about him.

¹⁶Yahweh is king forever!

He will drive out foreign people from his land.

¹⁷Yahweh, when the people who suffer cry out to you, you listen.

You hear them when they pray and you encourage them.

¹⁸You defend the orphans and oppressed people

when the strong and the wicked work to do them harm.

And so, no one has to worry or be terrified anymore.

Psalm 11

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹I trust that Yahweh will protect me.

So I do not fly off to the mountains like birds do.

²It is true that wicked people have hidden in the darkness,

that they have pulled back their bowstrings and aimed their arrows

to shoot them at people who honor Yahweh.

³When wicked people do not suffer for disobeying the laws,

what can righteous people do?

⁴But Yahweh is sitting on his throne in his sacred temple in heaven,

and he sees everything that people do.

⁵Yahweh examines what righteous people do and what wicked people do,

and he hates those who love to injure others.

⁶He will send down from the sky flaming coals and burning sulfur on the wicked;

he will send scorching hot winds to punish them.

⁷Yahweh does everything that is right, and he loves those who do what is right;
such people will come into his presence.

Psalm 12

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹Yahweh, help us! It seems like people who honor you are no more,
that those who are loyal to you have all vanished.

²Everyone tells lies to other people;
they deceive others by flattering them, but they tell lies.

³Yahweh, we wish that you would cut off their tongues
so that they cannot continue to boast.

⁴They say, "By telling lies we will get what we want;
we control what we say, so no one can tell us what we should do!"

⁵But Yahweh replies, "I have seen the violent things that they have done to helpless people;
I have heard those people groaning,
so I will arise and rescue the people who are wanting me to help them."

⁶Yahweh, you always do what you have promised to do;
what you have promised is as precious and pure as silver
that has been heated seven times in a furnace to get rid of all the impure material.

⁷Yahweh, we know that you will protect us who honor you
from those wicked people,

⁸those who strut around proudly,
while people praise them for doing evil deeds.

Psalm 13

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹Yahweh, how long will you continue to forget about me?
Will you hide yourself from me forever?

²How long must I endure anguish within myself?
Must I be miserable every day?

How long will my enemies continue to defeat me?

³Yahweh my God, look at me and answer me.

Restore my strength, or I will die.

⁴Do not allow my enemies to boast and to say, "We have defeated him!"

Do not allow them to defeat me,

with the result that they will rejoice about it!

⁵But I trust that you will faithfully love me;

I will rejoice when you rescue me.

⁶Yahweh, you have done many good things for me,

so I will sing to you.

Psalm 14

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹Only foolish people say to themselves, "There is no God!"

People who say those things only do corrupt deeds;

there is not one of them who does what is good.

²From heaven Yahweh looks down at everyone;

he looks to see if anyone is very wise,

wise enough to desire to know him.

³Everyone turns away from Yahweh. They are depraved and do disgusting, filthy things.

No one does what is good.

⁴Will those evil people never learn what God will do to punish them?

They act violently toward Yahweh's people and want to consume them like one who eats food consumes it,

and they never pray to Yahweh.

⁵But some day they will become very terrified

because God helps those who act righteously and will punish those who reject him.

⁶Those who do evil may prevent helpless people from doing what they plan to do,

but Yahweh protects them.

⁷Out of Zion Yahweh will come and rescue the Israelite people!

He will make his people free again and will bring them back to their home.

On that day all of us Israelite people will rejoice, and we, who are also called the descendants of Jacob, will be happy.

Psalm 15

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, who are allowed to enter your sacred tent?

Who are allowed to live on your sacred mountain?

²Only those who always do what is right and do not sin may do that,
those who always speak the truth.

³They do not slander others.

They do not do to others things that are wrong,
and they do not say bad things about anyone.

⁴People who honor God hate those whom he has rejected,
but they respect those who have a fearful respect for Yahweh.

They do what they have promised to do
even if it causes them trouble to do that.

⁵They lend money to others without charging interest,
and they never accept bribes in order to lie about people who have not done anything wrong.
Those who do those things will always live in safety.

Psalm 16

A psalm written by David

¹God, protect me
because I go to you to keep me safe!

²I said to Yahweh, "You are my Lord;
all the good things that I have come from you."

³People who try to be holy who live in this land are wonderful;
I delight to be with them.

⁴Those who choose to worship other gods will have many things that cause them to be sad.
I will not join them when they make sacrifices to their gods;
I will not even join them in speaking the names of their gods.

⁵Yahweh, you are the one whom I have chosen,

and you give me great blessings.

You protect me and control what happens to me.

⁶Yahweh has given me a wonderful place in which to live;

I am delighted with all the things that he has given me.

⁷I will praise Yahweh, the one who teaches me;

even at night he tells my heart what is right for me to do.

⁸I know that Yahweh is always with me.

Nothing will take me from his side.

⁹Therefore I am glad; I am honored to praise him,

and I can rest securely

¹⁰because you, Yahweh, will not allow me to remain in the place where the dead people are,

and you will not allow me, someone who has been faithful to the covenant, to stay there.

¹¹You will show me the road that leads to where I receive eternal life,

and you will make me joyful when I am with you.

I will have pleasure forever when I am at your right hand.

Psalm 17

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, listen to me while I plead with you to act justly toward me.

Hear me while I call out to you to help me.

Pay attention to what I say while I pray

because I am speaking honestly.

²You are the one who is able to declare that I am innocent;

please agree to do what is right for me.

³If you come to me at night to learn what I think,

if you see what I think in my heart,

you will know that I have determined to never tell any lies; you will find that I do not think evil things.

⁴I have not acted like those who do not honor you;

I have always acted in the power of what you have instructed me;

I have not acted like those who do not know your law.

⁵I have always done what you told me to do;

I have never failed to do those things.

⁶O God, I am praying to you because you answer me;
please listen to what I am saying.

⁷Continue to show me your love as you promised you would do.

By your great power you protect all who trust in you; you keep them safe from their enemies.

⁸Protect me as carefully as people protect their own eyes;
protect me like birds protect their babies under their wings.

⁹Do not allow wicked people to attack me,
those enemies of mine who surround, wanting to kill me.

¹⁰They are proud of their riches and success,
but they have no mercy on anyone.

¹¹They have hunted for me and found me.
They surround me, watching for an opportunity to throw me to the ground and kill me.

¹²They are like lions that are ready to tear apart the animals that they capture;
They are like young lions that are hiding, waiting to jump on their prey.

¹³Yahweh, arise, attack my enemies, and defeat them!
With your sword save me from those wicked people!

¹⁴Yahweh, by your power rescue me from those people who are interested only in things here in this world.
But you provide plenty of food for those whom you love dearly;
their children also have many things that their grandchildren will inherit.

¹⁵Yahweh, because I act in the right way, I will be with you one day.
When I awake after I die, I will see you face to face, and then I will be happy.

Psalm 18

A psalm written by God's servant David. He sang it after Yahweh had rescued him from Saul and his other enemies.

¹Yahweh, I love you, the one who enables me to be strong.

²Yahweh is like a huge rock; when I am on top of it, my enemies cannot reach me. He is like a strong fortress; I run into it to be safe.

He protects me like a shield protects a soldier; he is the one whom I trust to keep me safe; he defends me by his great power!

³I called out to Yahweh, who deserves for me to praise him, and he rescued me from my enemies.

⁴All around me were dangerous situations in which I might die; it was as though there were huge waves that almost crashed on me and killed me.

⁵It was as though the place where dead people are had ropes that were wrapped around me, or it was as though there was a trap that would seize and kill me.

⁶But when I was very distressed, I called out to Yahweh, and far off in his temple he heard me.

He listened to me when I cried out for help.

⁷Then Yahweh became angry, and the earth quaked, and the mountains shook to their very foundations!

⁸He was so angry that it was as though smoke poured out from his nostrils, as though burning coals came out of his mouth!

⁹He opened the sky and came down with a black cloud under his feet.

¹⁰He flew, riding on the back of an angel traveling fast, which the wind was blowing along.

¹¹Darkness was all around him like a blanket; dark clouds, full of water moisture, covered him.

¹²Hailstones and flashes of lightning were around him; hail and burning coals fell down from the sky.

¹³Then Yahweh shouted loudly from the sky, and to his enemies, it sounded like thunder. Yahweh, the Supreme God, rained hailstones on them and caused lightning to flash against them.

¹⁴He shot his arrows at them and caused them to scatter; his flashes of lightning caused them to become very confused.

¹⁵The bottom of the ocean became visible, and the water uncovered the foundations of the earth when Yahweh rebuked his enemies

with the breath that came in his anger!

¹⁶It was as though he reached down from heaven and grabbed me and pulled me up out of the deep ocean.

¹⁷He rescued me from my strong enemies who hated me; they were very strong, and I could not defeat them by myself.

¹⁸When I was distressed, they attacked me, but Yahweh defended me.

¹⁹He made me completely safe; he rescued me because he was pleased with me.

²⁰Yahweh has rewarded me because I do what is right; he has blessed me because I am innocent.

²¹I have obeyed Yahweh's laws; I have not abandoned him.

²²I have followed his decrees; I have not stopped obeying them.

²³He knows that I have not done what is wrong and that I have kept myself from sinning.

²⁴So he rewards me because I do what is right; he knows that I have not committed sins.

²⁵Yahweh, you are faithful to those who faithfully do your covenant; you always do what is good to those who do not do evil.

²⁶You are kind to those who are honest toward others, but you act wisely toward those who act dishonestly.

²⁷You save those who are humble, but you humiliate those who are proud.

²⁸You keep me alive, and you will continue to do so.

²⁹You enable me to be strong, so that I can attack and defeat a line of enemy soldiers; with your help I can scale the walls that surround my enemies' cities.

³⁰Everything that Yahweh my God does is perfect. We can depend on him to do what he promises.

He is like a shield to protect all those who go to him to be safe.

³¹Yahweh is the only one who is God; only he is like a huge rock on top of which we can be safe.

³²God is the one who enables me to be strong and who keeps me safe on the roads that I walk on.

³³He enables me to walk swiftly without stumbling as a deer walks in the mountains.

³⁴He teaches me how to use a strong bow in order that I can use it to fight in battles.

³⁵Yahweh, you protect and save me with your shield; you are strong and have therefore kept me safe. I have become strong because you have helped me.

³⁶You have made a safe path for me, with the result that now I do not slip.

³⁷I pursued my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until I had defeated them all.

³⁸When I strike them, they are not able to get up again; they lie on the ground, defeated.

³⁹You have enabled me to be strong in order that I can fight battles and defeat my enemies.

⁴⁰You delivered my enemies to me, for me to strike them on their necks. I have gotten rid of all those who hated me.

⁴¹They shouted for someone to help them, but no one saved them. They shouted out to Yahweh, but he did not help them.

⁴²I crushed them to powder, and they became like the dust that the wind blows away; I threw them out like people throw dirt out into the streets.

⁴³You enabled me to defeat those who fought against me and appointed me to be the ruler of many nations; people whom I did not know about previously are now slaves in my kingdom.

⁴⁴When foreigners hear about me, they cringe and they obey me.

⁴⁵They are no longer courageous, and from their holes where they were hiding they come to me trembling.

⁴⁶Yahweh is alive! Praise the one who is like a huge rock on top of which I am safe! Exalt the God who saves me!

⁴⁷He enables me to get revenge on my enemies; he causes me to defeat nations and to rule over them.

⁴⁸It is Yahweh who rescues me from my enemies. He has lifted me up high so that violent men could not reach me and harm me.

⁴⁹So I praise him, and I tell the nations the great things that he has done.

⁵⁰He has enabled me, his king, to powerfully defeat my enemies; he faithfully loves me as he promised in his covenant.

He loves me, David, the one he has chosen to be king, and he will faithfully love my descendants forever.

Psalm 19

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹When people look at everything that God has placed in the skies, they can see that he is very great;
they can see the great things that he has created.

²Day after day it is as though the sun proclaims the glory of God,
and night after night it is as though the moon and stars say that they know that God made them.

³They do not really speak;
they do not say any words.

There is no sound from them for anyone to hear.

⁴But what they declare about God goes throughout the world,
and even people who live in the most distant places on earth can know it.
The sun is in the skies where God placed it;

⁵it rises each morning like a bridegroom who is happy as he comes out of his bedroom after his wedding.
It is like a strong athlete who is very eager to start running in a race.

⁶The sun rises at one side of the sky and goes across the sky and sets on the other side;
nothing can hide from its heat.

⁷The instructions that Yahweh has given us are perfect;
they revive us.
We can be sure that the things that Yahweh has told us will never change,
and by learning them people who have not been previously taught will become wise.

⁸Yahweh's laws are fair;
when we obey them, we become joyful.

The commands of Yahweh are clear,
and by reading them we start to understand how God wants us to behave.

⁹It is good for people to revere Yahweh;
that is something that they will do forever.
What Yahweh has decreed is fair,
and it is always right.

¹⁰The things that God has decided are more valuable than gold,

even the finest gold.

They are sweeter than honey
that drips from honeycombs.

¹¹Furthermore, by reading them I learn what things are good to do and what things are evil,
and they promise a great reward
to us who obey them.

¹²But there is no one who can know all his errors;
so Yahweh, forgive me for these things which I do that I do not realize are wrong.

¹³Keep me from doing things that I know are wrong;
do not let me keep doing the evil things I want to do.
If you do that, I will no longer be guilty for committing such sins,
and I will not commit the great sin of rebelling terribly against you.

¹⁴O Yahweh, you are like a huge rock on top of which I can be safe; you are the one who protects me.
I hope that the things that I say and what I think will always please you.

Psalm 20

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹We desire that Yahweh may help you when you call out to him when you have troubles!
We desire that God, whom our ancestor Jacob honored, may keep you safe from your enemies.

²We desire that he may reach out from his sacred temple and help you
and aid you from where he lives on Mount Zion.

³We desire that he may accept all the offerings that you give him to be burned on the altar
and all your other offerings.

⁴We desire that he may give to you what you desire in your heart,
and that you may be able to accomplish all that you desire to do.

⁵When you defeat your enemies, we will shout joyfully.
We will lift up a banner proclaiming that it is God who has helped you.
May Yahweh do for you all that you request him to do.

⁶I know now that Yahweh rescues me, the one whom he has chosen to be king.
From his holy place in heaven he will answer me,
and he will save me by his great power.

⁷Some kings trust that because they have chariots they will be able to defeat their enemies,
and some trust that their horses will enable them to defeat their enemies,
but we will trust in the power of Yahweh our God.

⁸Some will stumble and fall down,
but we will be strong and not be moved.

⁹Yahweh, help the king defeat our enemies!
Answer us when we call out to you to help us!

Psalm 21

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹Yahweh, the man you made king is glad because you have caused him to be strong.
He rejoices because you have enabled him to defeat his enemies.

²You have given him everything he most desired,
and you have not refused to do what he requested you to do.

³You have done so many wonderful things for him.
You placed a gold crown on his head.

⁴He asked you to let him live for a long time,
and you have enabled him to live for a long time.

⁵His power as king is very great because you have allowed him to win victories over his enemies.

⁶You will bless him forever,
and you have caused him to be joyful in your presence.

⁷Yahweh, you are God Almighty,
and the king trusts in you.
Because you faithfully love him,
disastrous things will never happen to him.

⁸You will enable him to kill all his enemies,
all those who hate him.

⁹When you appear, you will throw them into a fiery furnace.
Because you are angry with them, you will swallow them up;
the fire will burn them up.

¹⁰You will remove their children from this earth;

their descendants will all disappear.

¹¹They wanted to harm you,
but what they plan will never succeed.

¹²You will cause them to run away
by shooting arrows at them.

¹³Yahweh, show us that you are very strong!
When you do that, we will sing and praise you because you are very powerful.

Psalm 22

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be sung to the tune 'Doe of the Dawn'

¹My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why do you stay so far from me,
and why do you not listen to me?
Why do you not hear me when I am suffering and groaning?
²My God, every day I call to you during the daytime, but you do not answer me.
I call to you during the night; I am not silent at all.

³But you are holy.
You sit on your throne as king, and we the people of Israel praise you.

⁴Our ancestors trusted in you.
Because they trusted in you, you rescued them.
⁵When they called out to you for help, you saved them.
They trusted in you, and they were not disappointed.

⁶But you have not rescued me!
People despise me and consider that I am not a man;
they think that I am a worm!
Everyone scorns me and despises me.

⁷Everyone who sees me makes fun of me.
They sneer at me and insult me by shaking their heads at me as though I were an evil man.
They say,

⁸"He trusts in Yahweh,
so Yahweh should save him!

He says that Yahweh is very pleased with him;
if that is so, Yahweh should rescue him!"

⁹You, God, have been with me since I was in my mother's womb,
and you taught me to trust you when I was at my mother's breasts.

¹⁰It was as though you had adopted me right when I was born.
You have been my God ever since I was born.

¹¹So do not stay far from me now
because enemies who will cause me much trouble are near me,
and there is no one else who can help me.

¹²My enemies surround me like a herd of wild bulls.
Fierce people, like those strong bulls that graze on the hills in the region of Bashan, surround me.

¹³They are like roaring lions that are attacking the animals that they want to eat;
they rush toward me to kill me;
they are like lions that have their mouths open, ready to chew their victims to pieces.

¹⁴I am completely exhausted,
and all my bones are out of their joints.
I no longer expect that God will save me;
I am completely discouraged.

¹⁵My strength is all dried up
like a broken piece of a clay jar that has dried in the sun.
I am so thirsty that my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
God, I think that you are about to let my body die and become dust!

¹⁶My enemies are like wild dogs that surround me.
A group of evil men has encircled me, ready to attack me.
They have pierced through my hands and my feet.

¹⁷I am so weak and thin that I can count all my bones.
My enemies stare at me and gloat about what has happened to me.

¹⁸They looked at the clothes that I was wearing
and gambled to determine which piece each of them would get.

¹⁹Yahweh, be concerned for me!
You who are my source of strength,

come quickly and help me!

²⁰Rescue me from those who want to kill me with their swords.

Save my life from the power of those who are like wild dogs.

²¹Snatch me away from my enemies who are like lions with jaws open and ready to chew me up!

Grab me away from those men who are like wild oxen that attack other animals with their horns!

²²If you save me from them, I will declare to my fellow Israelites how great you are.

I will praise you among the group of your people gathered together to worship you.

²³You people who have an awesome respect for Yahweh, praise him!

All you who are descended from Jacob, honor Yahweh!

All you Israelite people, revere him!

²⁴He does not despise or ignore those who are suffering;

he does not hide his face from them.

He has listened to them when they cried out to him for help.

²⁵Yahweh, in the great gathering of your people, I will praise you for what you have done.

In the presence of those who have an awesome respect for you, I will offer the sacrifices that I promised.

²⁶The poor people whom I have invited to the meal will eat as much as they want.

All who come to worship Yahweh will praise him.

I pray that God will enable you all to live a long and happy life!

²⁷I pray that people in all nations, even in the remote areas, will think about Yahweh and turn to him,

and that people from all the clans in the world will bow down before him.

²⁸For Yahweh is the king!

He rules all the nations.

²⁹All the rich people on the earth will celebrate and bow before him.

Some day they will die, for they cannot avoid it,

but they will prostrate themselves on the ground in his presence.

³⁰People in the future generations will also serve Yahweh.

They will tell their children about what Yahweh has done.

³¹People who are not yet born, who will live in future years, will learn how Yahweh rescued his people.

People will tell them, "Yahweh did it!"

Psalm 23

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, you care for me like a shepherd cares for his sheep,
so I have everything that I need.

²You enable me to rest in peace
as when a shepherd leads his sheep to places where there is plenty of green grass for them to eat,
as when he lets them lie down beside streams where the water is flowing slowly.

³You renew my strength.
You show me how to live in the right way,
in order that I can honor you.

⁴Even when I am walking in very dangerous places
where I might die,
I will not be afraid of anything
because you are with me.
You protect me like a shepherd protects his sheep.

⁵You prepare a great feast for me
in a place where my enemies can see me.
You welcome me
as a guest whom you honor.
You have given me very many blessings!

⁶I am certain that you will be good to me
and act mercifully toward me
as long as I live;
then, O Yahweh, I will live in your home forever.

Psalm 24

A psalm written by David

¹The earth and everything in it belongs to Yahweh;
all the people in the world belong to him, too;

²he built the land on the water,
above the water that is deep below.

³Who will be allowed to go up onto Mount Zion in Jerusalem,

in order to stand and worship in Yahweh's holy temple?

⁴Only those whose actions and thoughts are pure,
who have not worshiped idols,
and who do not tell lies when they have solemnly promised to tell the truth.

⁵Yahweh will bless them.

When God judges them, he will rescue them and say that they have done nothing wrong.

⁶They are the people who come to God,
they are the ones who desire to worship God,
and serve the God of Jacob.

⁷Open up the temple gates
in order that our glorious king may enter!

⁸Do you know who the glorious king is?
It is Yahweh, the one who is very strong;
It is Yahweh, who conquers all his enemies in battles!

⁹Open up the temple gates
in order that our glorious king may enter!

¹⁰Do you know who the glorious king is?
It is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies;
he is our glorious king!

Psalm 25

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, I give myself to you.

²My God, I trust in you.

Do not allow my enemies to defeat me
and shame me.

Do not allow my enemies to defeat me
and rejoice over me.

³Do not allow any of those who trust in you to be ashamed.
Cause those who act treacherously toward others to be disgraced.

⁴Yahweh, show me the way that I should conduct my life,

teach me how to act in the manner that you want me to act.

⁵Teach me to conduct my life by obeying your truth

because you are my God, the one who saves me.

All during the day I trust in you.

⁶Yahweh, do not forget how you have acted mercifully to me and have faithfully loved me because of your covenant with me;

that is the way that you have acted toward me from long ago.

⁷Forgive me for all the sinful things I did and the ways that I rebelled against you when I was young;

I request this because you faithfully love your people and do good things for them, as you promised in your covenant.

Yahweh, do not forget me!

⁸Yahweh is good and fair,

so he shows sinners how they should conduct their lives.

⁹He shows humble people what is right for them to do

and teaches them what he wants them to do.

¹⁰He always faithfully loves us and does what he has promised

for those who obey his covenant and who do what he requires.

¹¹Yahweh, forgive me for all my sins, which are many,

in order that I may honor you.

¹²To all those who have an awesome respect for you,

you show them the right way to conduct their lives.

¹³They will always be prosperous,

and their descendants will continue to live in this land.

¹⁴Yahweh is a friend of those who have an awesome respect for him,

and he teaches them the covenant that he made with them.

¹⁵I always request Yahweh to help me,

and he rescues me from danger.

¹⁶Yahweh, pay attention to me and be merciful to me because I am alone,

and I am greatly distressed because I am suffering.

¹⁷I have many troubles that make me afraid;

rescue me from them.

¹⁸Note that I am distressed and troubled,

and forgive me for all my sins.

¹⁹Note that I have many enemies;
you see that they hate me very much.

²⁰Protect me and rescue me from them;
do not allow them to defeat me
with the result that I would be ashamed;
I have gone to you to get refuge.

²¹Protect me because I do what is good and honest
and because I trust in you.

²²God, rescue us Israelite people from all of our troubles!

Psalm 26

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, show that I am innocent.
I always do what is right;
I have trusted in you and never doubted that you would help me.

²Yahweh, examine what I have done and test me;
thoroughly evaluate what I think in my inner being.

³I never forget that you are true to your covenant and faithfully love me;
I conduct my life according to your faithfulness.

⁴I do not spend my time with liars,
and I stay away from hypocrites.

⁵I do not like to be with evil people,
and I avoid wicked people.

⁶Yahweh, I wash my hands to show that I am innocent.
As I join with others marching around your altar,

⁷we sing songs to thank you,
and we tell others the wonderful things that you have done.

⁸Yahweh, I love to be in the house where you live,
in the place where your glory appears.

⁹Do not get rid of me like you get rid of sinners;

do not cause me to die like you cause those who murder people to die,

¹⁰people who are ready to do wicked things

and those who are always taking bribes.

¹¹But as for me, I always try to do what is right.

So act kindly toward me and rescue me.

¹²I stand in places where I am safe,

and when all your people gather together, I praise you.

Psalm 27

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh is the one who gives me life and the one who saves me,

so I do not need to be afraid of anyone.

Yahweh is the one to whom I go for refuge,

so I will never be afraid.

²When those who do evil come near me to destroy me,

they stumble and fall down.

³Even if an army surrounds me,

I will not be afraid.

Even if they attack me,

I will trust in God.

⁴There is one thing that I have requested from Yahweh;

this is the one thing that I desire:

that I may worship in Yahweh's house every day during my life,

that I may see how wonderful Yahweh is,

and that I may ask him what he wants me to do.

⁵He will protect me when I have troubles;

he will keep me safe in his sacred tent.

He will set me safely on a high rock.

⁶Then I will triumph over my enemies.

I will shout joyfully as I offer sacrifices in his sacred tent,

and I will praise Yahweh as I sing.

⁷Yahweh, listen to me while I call to you.

Act kindly toward me and answer my prayer.

⁸Within my inner being I desire to worship you,
so, Yahweh, I will come to your temple to pray to you.

⁹I am your servant;
do not be angry with me, or turn away from me.

You have always helped me.

You are the one who has saved me,
so do not abandon me now.

¹⁰Even if my father and mother desert me,
Yahweh always takes care of me.

¹¹Yahweh, teach me to do what you want me to do,
and lead me on a safe path
because I have many enemies.

¹²Do not allow my enemies to do to me what they want;
they say many false things about me and threaten to do violent things to me.

¹³I would have died if I had not trusted you
to be good to me as long as I live.

¹⁴So trust in Yahweh!
Be strong and courageous,
and wait expectantly for him to help you!

Psalm 28

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, I call out to you;
You are like a huge rock on top of which I am safe.
Do not refuse to answer me
because if you are silent, I will soon be with those who are in their graves.

²Listen to me when I call out for you to help me,
when I lift up my hands as I face your very holy place in your sacred tent.

³Do not drag me away with wicked people,

with those who do wicked deeds,
with those who pretend to act peacefully toward others
while in their inner beings, they hate them.

⁴Punish those people in the way that they deserve for what they have done;
punish them for their evil deeds.

⁵Yahweh, they do not pay attention to the wonderful things that you have done and that you have created;
so get rid of them permanently and do not let them appear again!

⁶Praise Yahweh
because he has heard me when I called out for him to help me!

⁷Yahweh makes me strong and protects me like a shield;
I trust in him, and he helps me.

So I was glad in my inner being,
and from my inner being I praise him as I sing to him.

⁸Yahweh causes us to be strong and protects us;
he saves me, the one he appointed to be king.

⁹Yahweh, save your people;
bless those who belong to you.
Take care of them like a shepherd takes care of his sheep;
take care of them forever.

Psalm 29

A psalm written by David

¹Mighty people, praise Yahweh!
Praise him because he is very glorious and powerful.

²Praise Yahweh with the glory his names deserves.
Bow down and worship Yahweh because he is holy and his holiness shines out from him with wonderful beauty.

³Yahweh's voice is heard above the oceans;
the glorious God thunders.
He appears over the huge oceans.

⁴His voice is powerful and majestic.

⁵Yahweh's voice breaks great cedar trees,

the cedars that grow in Lebanon.

⁶He causes earthquakes to shake the region of Lebanon as a young cow jumps;
he causes Sirion (also called Mount Hermon) to shake as a young bull jumps.

⁷Yahweh's voice tells the lightning to flash.

⁸His voice causes the desert to shake;
he shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹Yahweh's voice makes the large trees shake,
and strips the leaves from the trees
while the people in the temple shout, "Praise God!"

¹⁰Yahweh rules over the flood that covered the earth;
he is our king who will rule forever.

¹¹Yahweh enables his people to be strong,
and he blesses them by causing things to go well for them.

Psalm 30

A psalm written by David for the dedication of the temple

¹Yahweh, I praise you because you rescued me. You did not allow me to die or my enemies to gloat over me.

²Yahweh, my God, I called out for you to help me when I was wounded, and you healed me.

³You saved me from death. I was nearly dead, but you caused me to become healthy again.

⁴All you who are faithful to the covenant with Yahweh, sing to praise him! Remember what God, the holy one, has done and thank him!

⁵When he becomes angry, he is angry for only a very short time, but he is good to us all of our lives.
We may cry during the night, but the next morning we will be joyful.

⁶As for me, I was calm when I said to myself, "No one will defeat me!"

⁷Yahweh, because you were good to me, at first you caused me to be secure as though I were a high mountain.
But then I thought that you had turned away from me, and I became afraid.

⁸So I called out to you, and I pleaded for you to help me.

⁹I said, "Yahweh, what will you gain if I die?

In what way will it benefit you if I go to the place where the dead people are?

When I am dead I will certainly not be able to praise you, and I will not be able to tell others that you are trustworthy!

¹⁰Yahweh, listen to me, and act mercifully to me! Yahweh, help me!"

¹¹But now you have healed me, and you have changed me from being sad to dancing joyfully.

You have taken away the clothes that showed that I was very sad and given me clothes that showed that I was very joyful.

¹²So I will not be silent; I will sing out and praise you.

Yahweh, you are my God, and I will thank you forever.

Psalm 31

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹Yahweh, I have come to you to be protected;
do not allow me to be defeated and disgraced.
Since you always do what is fair,
rescue me!

²Listen to me, and save me right now!
Be like a huge rock on which I can be safe
and like a strong fort in which I will be secure.

³Yes, you are like my huge rock and my fort;
guide me and lead me because I worship you.

⁴You are the one who protects me,
so keep me from falling into the hidden traps that my enemies have set for me.

⁵Yahweh, you are a God whom I can trust,
so I put myself into your care
because you will rescue me.

⁶Yahweh, I hate those who worship useless idols,
but I trust in you.

⁷I will be very glad because you faithfully love me.
You see me when I have been afflicted,
and you know when I have had troubles.

⁸You have not allowed my enemies to capture me;
instead, you have rescued me from danger.

⁹But now, Yahweh, act kindly toward me
because I am distressed.

Because I cry so much, I cannot see well,
and I am completely exhausted.

¹⁰I have become very weak because I am so miserable;
my life is getting shorter.

I have become weak because of all my troubles;
even my bones are becoming weaker.

¹¹All of my enemies make fun of me,
and even my neighbors despise me.
Even my friends are afraid of me because they think that you are punishing me.
When they see me on the streets, they run away.

¹²People have forgotten me like they forget people who are dead.
They think I am as useless as a broken pot.

¹³I have heard people slandering me,
and they have terrified me.
My enemies are making plans
to kill me.

¹⁴But Yahweh, I trust in you.
I say confidently that you are the God I worship.

¹⁵My whole life is in your hands;
save me from my enemies,
from those who pursue me.

¹⁶Act kindly toward me
and rescue me because you always faithfully love me.

¹⁷Yahweh, I call out to you,
so do not allow others to disgrace me.
I wish that wicked people may be disgraced;
I wish that they may go down to the place where the people are silent and dead.

¹⁸I wish that you may cause people who tell lies to be unable to speak.
Do that to people who are proud and to those who arrogantly accuse others.

¹⁹You have stored up many great and good things to do for those who have great respect for you.
You do good things for those who go to you to be protected;

everyone sees you doing that.

²⁰You hide people in your presence where it is safe,
and you protect them from others who plot to kill them.
You hide them in safe places where their enemies cannot speak evil at them.

²¹Praise Yahweh!
When my enemies surrounded the city in which I was living,
he showed me wonderfully that he faithfully loves me.

²²I was afraid and cried out in a hurry, "I have been separated from Yahweh!"
but you heard me and answered my cry for help.

²³You people who belong to Yahweh, love him!
He protects those who are loyal to him,
but he punishes the proud; he punishes them severely as they deserve.

²⁴You who confidently expect Yahweh to do great things for you,
be strong and be courageous!

Psalm 32

A psalm written by David, which will help people to be wise

¹Those whom God has forgiven for rebelling against him
and those whose sin God does not look at,
these are the ones who are truly fortunate!

²Those whose record of sins Yahweh has erased
and those who no longer do deceitful things,
these are the ones who are truly fortunate!

³When I did not confess my sins,
my body was very weak and sick,
and I groaned all day long.

⁴Day and night, Yahweh, you punished me severely.
My strength disappeared like water that evaporates on a hot summer day.

⁵Then I confessed my sins to you;
I stopped trying to hide them.
I said to myself,

"I will tell Yahweh the wrong things that I have done."

When I confessed them, you forgave me,
so now I am no longer guilty for my sins.

⁶Therefore the people who honor you should pray to you
when they are in great trouble.

If they do that, difficulties will not come on them like a great flood.

⁷You are like a place where I can hide from my enemies;
you protect me from troubles
and enable me to shout, praising you for saving me from my enemies.

⁸Yahweh says to me, "I will instruct you about how you should conduct your life.
I will teach you and watch over you.

⁹Do not be stupid like horses and mules that do not understand anything;
they need bits
so they will go in the direction you want them to go."

¹⁰Wicked people will have many troubles that will make them sad,
but those who trust in Yahweh will experience him faithfully loving them all the time.

¹¹So, all you righteous people, rejoice about what Yahweh has done for you;
you whose heart are pure, be glad and shout joyfully!

Psalms 33

¹You righteous people should shout joyfully to Yahweh
because that is what he deserves.

²Praise Yahweh as you play songs on the harp.
Praise him as you play harps that have ten strings.

³Sing a new song to him;
play those instruments well, and shout joyfully as you play them.

⁴Yahweh always does what he says that he will do;
we can trust that everything that he does is right.

⁵He loves everything that we do that is just and right.
Yahweh helps people all over the earth because he always loves them.

⁶Yahweh created everything in the sky by commanding it.

By what he commanded, he created all the stars.

⁷He gathered all the water into one huge mass
like someone scoops liquid into a container.

⁸Everyone on the earth should honor Yahweh;
everyone on the earth should honor him.

⁹When he spoke, he created the world.
Everything started to exist when he commanded it to be.

¹⁰Yahweh stops the other nations from doing the things they want to do.
He prevents them from doing the evil things that they plan to do.

¹¹But what Yahweh decides to do will last forever.
What he plans to do will never change.

¹²Yahweh blesses our nation, we who worship him;
How fortunate are we, the nation that belongs to him forever!

¹³Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees all people.

¹⁴From where he rules, he looks down on all the people who live on the earth.

¹⁵He forms our inner beings,
and he sees everything that we do.

¹⁶It is not because a king has a great army that he is able to win battles,
and it is not because a soldier is very strong that he is able to defeat his enemy.

¹⁷It is foolish to think that because horses are very strong,
they will be able to win a battle and save their riders.

¹⁸Do not forget that Yahweh watches over those who honor him,
those who confidently expect him to faithfully love them.

¹⁹He saves them from dying before they should die;
he preserves them when there is a famine.

²⁰We trust Yahweh to help us;
he protects us as a shield protects a soldier.

²¹We rejoice because of what he has done for us;
we trust in him because he is holy.

²²Yahweh, we pray that you will always faithfully love us
while we confidently expect you to do great things for us.

Psalm 34

A psalm written by David when he pretended to be insane in front of King Abimelech so that the king would send him away

¹I will always thank Yahweh;

I will constantly praise him.

²I will praise Yahweh for what he has done.

All those who are oppressed should listen to me and rejoice.

³Join with me in telling others that Yahweh is great!

You and I should together proclaim how glorious he is!

⁴I prayed to Yahweh, and he answered my prayer;

he rescued me from all those who caused me to be afraid.

⁵Those who trust that he will help them will be joyful;

they will never have to look down in disgrace.

⁶I was miserable, but I called out to Yahweh, and he heard me.

He rescued me from all my troubles.

⁷An angel from Yahweh guards those who have an awesome respect for him,
and the angel rescues them.

⁸Try for yourself, and you will experience that Yahweh is good to you!

How fortunate are those who trust him to protect them.

⁹All you who belong to him, have an awesome respect for him!

Those who do that will always have the things that they need.

¹⁰Lions are usually very strong, but sometimes even young lions are hungry and become weak.

However, those who trust in Yahweh will have everything that they need.

¹¹You who are my students, come and listen to me,

and I will teach you how to have an awesome respect for Yahweh.

¹²If any of you wants to enjoy life

and have a good long life,

¹³do not speak what is evil!

Do not tell lies!

¹⁴Refuse to do evil; instead, do what is good!

Always try hard to enable people to live peacefully with each other!

¹⁵Yahweh carefully watches over those who act righteously;
he always responds to them when they call to him for help.

¹⁶But Yahweh works against those who do what is evil.
After they die, people here on earth will forget them completely.

¹⁷Yahweh hears righteous people when they call out to him;
he rescues them from all their troubles.

¹⁸Yahweh is always ready to help those who are discouraged;
he rescues those who have no hope for anything good.

¹⁹Righteous people may have many troubles,
but Yahweh rescues them from all those troubles.

²⁰Yahweh protects them from being harmed;
when their enemies attack them,
they will not break any bones of those righteous people.

²¹Disasters will kill the wicked people,
and Yahweh will punish those who oppose righteous people.

²²Yahweh will save those who serve him.
He will not condemn those who trust in him.

Psalm 35

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, fight against those who fight against me!

Fight with my enemies when they fight me!

²Be like a shield to protect me
and come to help me!

³Lift up your spear and throw it at those who pursue me!
Promise me that you will enable me to defeat my enemies.

⁴Those who are trying to kill me—make others disgrace and dishonor them.
Push back and confuse those who are planning to do evil things to me.

⁵Send your angel to pursue them
and to make them disappear like chaff that the wind blows away.

⁶Cause the path on which they run to be dark and slippery
as your angel pursues them!

⁷Although I did not do anything wrong to them,
they dug a deep pit for me to fall into;
they hid a net in which they would catch me.

⁸Cause them to suddenly experience disaster!
Cause their own nets to trap them.
Cause them to fall into the pits that they have dug for me, and make them die in them!

⁹Then I will rejoice in what you, Yahweh, have done for me;
I will be glad that you have rescued me.

¹⁰With my whole inner being I will say,
"There is no one like Yahweh!
No one else can rescue helpless people from powerful people.
No one else can rescue weak and needy people from those who want to rob them."

¹¹People who tell lies stand in court
and accuse me of doing things that I do not know anything about.

¹²In return for my doing good things for them, they do evil things to me,
with the result that I feel that I am alone.

¹³When they were ill, I showed that I was sad.
I did not eat any food, and I bowed my head as I prayed for them.

¹⁴I mourned and bowed my head as I prayed
as though it were a friend or my mother for whom I was grieving.

¹⁵But when I had troubles, they were all happy about it.
They unexpectedly gathered around to make fun of me.
Strangers kept striking me;
they would not stop.

¹⁶People who respect no one ridiculed me
and snarled at me.

¹⁷Lord, how long will you only watch them doing this?
Rescue me from their attacks;
Save me from being killed by these men who are attacking me

as lions attack other animals!

¹⁸Then, when many of your people gather,

I will praise you,

and I will thank you in front of all of them.

¹⁹Do not allow my enemies, who tell lies about me, defeat me

and then rejoice about it!

Do not allow those who hate me when there is no reason to hate me

to laugh about how I suffer!

²⁰They do not speak peacefully to people;

instead, they look for ways to tell lies about people in our land who do no harm to anyone.

²¹They shout at me in order to accuse me;

they say, "We saw the wrong things that you did!"

²²Yahweh, you have seen these things, so do not be silent!

Do not stay far from me!

²³Arise, my God, plead my case in court,

and successfully defend me!

²⁴Yahweh, my God, because you are righteous,

prove that I am innocent

so that my enemies will not be able to gloat that I was judged to be guilty.

²⁵Do not allow them to be able to say to themselves,

"Yes, we have gotten rid of him just like we desired!"

²⁶Cause those who rejoice about my misfortunes

to be completely confused and disgraced;

cause those who boast that they are much greater than I am

to be disgraced and dishonored!

²⁷But cause those who desire that you declare me innocent

to be happy and shout joyfully;

cause them to always say, "Yahweh is great!

He is delighted to cause things to go well for those who serve him."

²⁸Then I will proclaim that you act in the right way,

and I will praise you all the time.

Psalm 36

A psalm written for the choir director by David, a man who served God faithfully

¹A continual desire to sin is in the inner beings of wicked people.

They consider that they do not need to have an awesome respect for God.

²Because they want to believe good things about themselves,
they do not think that God knows and hates their sins.

³Everything that they say is deceitful and full of lies;
they no longer do what is good
and are no longer wise.

⁴While they are lying on their beds, they plan to do things to harm others;
they are determined to do things that are not good,
and they never refuse to do what is evil.

⁵Yahweh, your faithful love for us reaches as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness in doing what you have promised extends up to the clouds.

⁶Your righteous behavior is as permanent as the highest mountains;
your acting justly will continue as long as the deepest oceans will continue.
You take care of people and you take care of animals.

⁷God, your faithful love for us is very precious.
You protect us like birds protect their baby birds under their wings.

⁸You provide for us plenty of food from the abundant supply that you have;
your great gifts flow to us like a river.

⁹You are the one who causes everything to live;
your light is what enables us to know the truth about you.

¹⁰Continue to faithfully love those who are faithful to you,
and protect those who act righteously.

¹¹Do not allow proud people to attack me,
or allow wicked people to chase me away.

¹²Look where evil people have fallen on the ground, defeated;
they were thrown down, and they will never rise again.

Psalm 37

A psalm written by David

¹Do not be bothered by what wicked people do.

Do not desire to have the things that people who do wrong have

²because they will soon disappear like grass withers in the hot sun and dries up.

Just like some green plants come up but die during the hot summer,
evil people will soon die also.

³Trust in Yahweh and do what is good.

If you do that, then you will live safely in the land he has given you,
and that land will be a place where you can be faithful to God as you live your lives.

⁴Be delighted with all that Yahweh does for you;
if you do that, he will give you the things that you desire most.

⁵Commit to Yahweh all the things that you plan to do;
trust in him,
and he will do whatever is needed to help you.

⁶He will show as clearly as the sunlight that you are innocent;
he will show as clearly as the sun at noontime
that all the things that you have decided are just.

⁷Be quiet in Yahweh's presence and wait patiently for him to do what you want him to do.
Do not be bothered when what evil men do is successful,
when they are able to do the wicked things that they plan.

⁸Do not be angry about what wicked people do.
Do not want to punish them yourself.
Do not be envious of such people
because you will only harm yourself if you try to do that.

⁹Someday Yahweh will get rid of wicked people,
but those who trust in him will live safely in the land that he has given to them.

¹⁰Soon the wicked will disappear.
You will look for them, but they will be gone.

¹¹But those who are humble will live safely in their land.
They will happily enjoy living peacefully and having the other good things that Yahweh gives them.

¹²Wicked people plan to harm righteous people;

they snarl at them like wild animals.

¹³But Yahweh laughs at them

because he knows that someday he will judge and punish the wicked people.

¹⁴Wicked people pull out their swords

and they put strings on their bows,

ready to kill people who are poor

and to slaughter those who live righteously.

¹⁵But they will be killed by their own swords,

and their bows will be broken.

¹⁶It is good to be righteous even if you do not have many possessions,

but it is bad to be wicked even if you are very wealthy

¹⁷because Yahweh will completely remove the strength of wicked people,

but he will sustain people who live righteously.

¹⁸Day by day Yahweh protects those who have not done any evil things;

the things that Yahweh gives them will last forever.

¹⁹They will survive when calamities occur;

when there are famines, they will still have plenty to eat.

²⁰But wicked people will die;

just as the beautiful wild flowers in the fields die under the hot sun and disappear like smoke,

Yahweh will cause his enemies to suddenly disappear.

²¹The wicked people borrow money, but they are not able to repay it;

righteous people, in contrast, have enough money to give generously to others.

²²Those whom Yahweh has blessed will live safely in the land that he has given to them,

but he will get rid of those people whom he has cursed.

²³Yahweh protects those who do what is pleasing to him,

and he will enable them to walk confidently wherever they go;

²⁴even if they stumble, they will not fall down

because Yahweh holds them by his hand.

²⁵I was young previously, and now I am an old man,

but in all those years, I have never seen that righteous people have been abandoned by Yahweh,

nor have I seen that their children needed to beg for food.

²⁶Righteous people are generous and happily lend money to others,
and their children are a blessing to them.

²⁷Turn away from doing evil, and do what is good.

If you do that, you and your descendants will live in your land forever.

²⁸This will happen because Yahweh likes to see people doing what is just,
and he will never forsake righteous people.

He will protect them forever;
but he will get rid of the children of wicked people.

²⁹Righteous people will own the land that Yahweh promised to give to them,
and they will live there forever.

³⁰Righteous people give wise advice to others,
and they encourage other people to live rightly.

³¹They fill their minds with God's laws;
they do not stray from walking on God's path.

³²Those who are evil wait in ambush for righteous people
in order to kill them as they walk by.

³³But Yahweh will not abandon righteous people
and let them fall into their enemies' hands.
He will not allow righteous people to be condemned
when someone takes them to a judge to be put on trial.

³⁴Be patient and trust that Yahweh will help you,
and walk on his paths.
If you do that, he will honor you by giving you the land that he promised,
and when he gets rid of the wicked, you will see it happen.

³⁵I have seen that wicked people who act like tyrants sometimes prosper like trees that grow well in fertile soil,

³⁶but when I looked later, they were gone!
I searched for them, but Yahweh had caused them to disappear.

³⁷Notice the people who have not done evil things, those who act righteously;
their descendants will have peace in their inner beings.

³⁸But Yahweh will get rid of the wicked;
he will also get rid of their descendants.

³⁹Yahweh rescues righteous people;
in times of trouble he protects them.
⁴⁰Yahweh helps them and saves them;
he rescues them from being attacked by wicked people
because they go to him to be protected.

Psalm 38

A psalm written by David, asking God not to forget him

¹Yahweh, when you are angry with me,
do not rebuke me and punish me!
²Now it is as though you have shot your arrows at me and wounded me;
it is as though you have struck me and knocked me down.
³Because you have been angry with me,
I am suffering great pain.
Because of my sin,
my whole body is diseased.
⁴All my sins are like a flood that covers my head;
they are like a load that is very heavy; I cannot carry them.
⁵Because I have done foolish things,
I have sores that have become worse, and they stink.
⁶Sometimes I am bent over, and sometimes I lie prostrate;
I mourn all day.
⁷My body is burning with fever,
and I am very ill.
⁸I am completely exhausted, and I have no strength.
I am very distressed in my inner being, and I groan with pain.
⁹Yahweh, you know that I desire you to heal me;
you hear me while I am groaning.
¹⁰My heart pounds heavily, and all my strength is gone.
I am no longer able to see well.
¹¹My friends and neighbors stay away from me because of my sores;

even my own family stays far from me.

¹²Those who want to kill me set traps to catch me;

those who want to harm me discuss the ways that they can get rid of me;

they plot against me all day.

¹³Now I act like a deaf man and do not listen to what they say.

I act like a man who cannot talk, and I say nothing to reply to them.

¹⁴I act like a man who does not answer when people talk to him

because he cannot hear anything.

¹⁵But Yahweh, I trust in you.

My Lord God, you will answer me.

¹⁶I said to you, "Do not cause me to die so that my enemies will rejoice!

If troubles overwhelm me, my enemies will do very bad things to me!"

¹⁷I say that because I am about to fall down,

and I constantly have pain.

¹⁸I confess the wrong things that I have done;

I am very sorry for the sins that I have committed.

¹⁹My enemies are healthy and strong;

there are many people who hate me for no reason.

²⁰Those who do evil things to me in return for my doing good things to them

oppose me because I try to do what is right.

²¹Yahweh, do not abandon me!

My God, do not stay far from me!

²²Lord, you are the one who saves me;

Quickly come and help me!

Psalm 39

A psalm written by David for Jeduthun, the choir director

¹I said to myself, "I will be careful not to sin by the things that I say.

I will not say anything to complain to you

while wicked people are near to me and can hear me."

²So I was completely silent, and I did not even talk about things that were good;

but it was useless because I began to suffer even more.

³I became very anxious in my inner being.

As I thought about my troubles, I became more worried.

Then finally I said this:

⁴"Yahweh, show me how long I will live.

Tell me when I will die.

Tell me how many years I will live!

⁵It seems that you have caused me to live only a short time;

my lifetime seems nothing to you.

The time that all we humans live is as short as a puff of air.

⁶Then we disappear like a shadow does.

It seems that all that we do is for nothing.

We sometimes get a lot of money, but we do not even know who will get it after we die.

⁷So now, Yahweh, I can expect to receive nothing from anyone else.

You are the only one from whom I confidently expect to receive blessings.

⁸Deliver me from the sins that I have committed.

Do not allow foolish people to make fun of me.

⁹I did not say anything when you punished me

because I knew that you were the one who caused me to suffer.

¹⁰But now, please stop punishing me!

If you do not do that, I am about to die because of how you make me suffer.

¹¹When you rebuke someone and punish him for the sin that he has committed,

you destroy the things he loves like moths eat away at clothing.

Our lives disappear like a puff of air.

¹²Yahweh, listen to me while I pray;

pay attention to me while I cry out to you.

Help me while I am crying.

I am here on the earth for only a short time,

like all my ancestors.

¹³Now please allow me to be alone and do not punish me anymore

so that I may smile and be happy for a while before I die."

Psalm 40

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹I waited patiently for Yahweh to help me,
and he listened to me when I called out to him.

²When I had many troubles, it was as though I was in a deep pit.
But he lifted me up out of the mud and slime of that pit;
he set my feet on a solid rock
and enabled me to walk safely.

³He has given me a new song to sing,
a song to praise him who is our God.
Many people will find out what he has done for me,
and they will revere and trust him.

⁴How fortunate are those who trust Yahweh to protect them,
those who do not trust in idols
or join with those who worship those false gods.

⁵O Yahweh, my God, you have done many wonderful things!
No one can list all the wonderful things that you have planned for us.
If I tried to tell others about all those wonderful things,
I would not be able to
because there would be too many for me to mention.

⁶Sacrifices and other offerings are not the things that delight you most.
But you have enabled me to hear your commands.
Animals burned on the altar and other offerings for our sins are not what you require most.

⁷So I said to you, "Yahweh, here I am,
to obey the laws that have been written in the scroll,
things that you want me to do."

⁸O my God, I enjoy doing what you desire;
I am always thinking about your laws within my inner being.

⁹When all your people were gathered together,
I told them about how you do what is right and how you rescue us.
Yahweh, you know that I have not refused to tell that to them.

¹⁰I have not kept within me the news that you always act justly;
when many of your people have gathered together to worship you,
I have told them that you are faithful to us and save us.
I have not concealed that you faithfully love us and act loyally toward us.

¹¹Yahweh, do not stop acting mercifully toward me.
Because you faithfully love me and are loyal to me, protect me always.

¹²I have many troubles; I cannot count them.
I am now suffering the things that happened because I sinned.
I can no longer see because of my tears.
The sins that I have committed are more than the hairs on my head.
I am very discouraged.

¹³O Yahweh, please save me!
Come quickly to help me!

¹⁴Humble those who are happy about my troubles, and cause them to be disgraced.
Chase away those who are trying to get rid of me.

¹⁵I hope that those who make fun of me
will be dismayed when you defeat them.

¹⁶But I hope that all those who go to worship you will be very joyful.
I hope that those who love you because you saved them will shout repeatedly,
"Yahweh is great!"

¹⁷As for me, I am poor and needy,
but I know that the Lord has not forgotten me.
O my God, you are the one who saves and helps me,
so please come quickly and help me!

Psalm 41

A psalm written by David for the choir director

¹How fortunate are those who provide for the poor;
Yahweh will rescue those people when they have troubles.

²Yahweh will protect them and allow them to live for a long time.
He will enable them to be happy in the land of Israel

and will rescue them from their enemies.

³When they are sick, Yahweh will strengthen them
and will heal them.

⁴When I was sick, I said, "Yahweh, act mercifully toward me and heal me;
I know that I am sick because I have sinned against you."

⁵My enemies say cruel things about me;
they say, "How soon will he die, and then everyone will forget about him?"

⁶When my enemies come to me, they pretend to be concerned about me.
They eagerly listen to all the bad news about me.
Then they go away and tell everyone what is happening to me.

⁷All those who hate me whisper to others about me,
and they hope that very bad things will happen to me.

⁸They say, "He will soon die because of his being sick;
he will never get up from his bed before he dies."

⁹Even a very close friend, whom I trusted very much,
who often ate with me,
has betrayed me.

¹⁰But Yahweh, act mercifully to me, and enable me to become healthy again.
When you do that, I will be able to pay back my enemies.

¹¹If you enable me to do that, with the result that my enemies do not defeat me,
I will know that you are pleased with me.

¹²I will know that it is because I have done what is right that you have helped me,
and I will know that you will enable me to be with you forever.

¹³Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship;
Praise him forever!
Amen! I desire that it will be so!

Book Two

Psalm 42

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director

¹O God, I need you very much as a deer needs to drink water from a cool stream.

²I desire to be with you, the all-powerful God.

I say to myself, "When will I be able to go back to the temple in Israel
and worship in your presence again?"

³Every day and every night I weep;
the only thing I have to drink is my tears;
and while I do that, my enemies are always asking me,
"Why does your God not help you?"

⁴I pray earnestly to God as I remember
when I used to go with the crowd of people to the temple in Jerusalem.
I used to lead them as we walked along;
we were all shouting joyfully and singing to thank God for what he had done;
we were a large group who were celebrating.

⁵So now I say to myself, "Why am I in a panic?
I confidently expect God to bless me,
and again I will praise him,
my God, the one who saves me."

⁶But now, Yahweh, I was panicking,
so I think about you.

You are there in Israel where the Jordan River rushes down from the bottom of the peaks of Mount Hermon and
from Mount Mizar.

⁷But here, the great sorrow that I feel is like water that you send down;
it is like a waterfall that tumbles down and floods over me.

⁸I desire that Yahweh will show me each day that he faithfully loves me,
in order that each night I may sing to him
and pray to him, the God who causes me to live.

⁹I say to God, who is like a huge rock on top of which I am safe,
"Why have you forgotten me? You know the hardships that my enemies bring on me."

¹⁰They are always making fun of me;
they keep asking, "Why does your God not help you?"
When they insult me like that,

it is like wounds that shatter my bones.

¹¹But I say to myself,

“Why am I in a panic?

I will confidently expect God to bless me,

and I will praise him again,

my God, the one who saves me.”

Psalm 43

¹God, declare that I am innocent.

Defend me when people say things against me—those people who do not honor you!

Rescue me from people who deceive me and say things about me that are not true.

²You are God, the one who protects me;

why have you abandoned me?

It does not seem right that I should always have to be sad

because of my enemies acting cruelly toward me.

³Speak true words that help me to live.

Give a command that will allow me to go back to Zion, your sacred hill in Jerusalem,

and to your temple where you live.

⁴When you do that, I will go to your altar

to worship you, my God, who causes me to be very joyful.

There I will praise you, the God whom I worship, and I will play my harp.

⁵So why am I sad and discouraged?

I confidently expect God to bless me,

and again I will praise him,

my God, the one who saves me.

Psalm 44

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director.

¹God, we ourselves have heard

what our parents and grandparents told us.

They told us about the miracles

that you performed long ago.

²They told us how you expelled the ungodly people
and enabled us to live in their land.

They told us that you punished those ungodly people
and enabled your own people to possess the land.

³It was not by using their own swords that they conquered the people that lived in that land,
and it was not by their own power that they were victorious;
it was only by your power that they did those things;
and they were sure that you were with them,
showing that you were pleased with them.

⁴You are my king and my God;
Make us, your people, able to defeat our enemies.

⁵It is by your power that we knock our enemies down and tramp on them.

⁶I do not trust that I can save myself
by using my bow and arrows and my sword.

⁷No, it is you who have rescued us from our enemies;
it is you who have caused those who hate us to become ashamed because they were defeated.

⁸We have always been proud about what God has done for us,
and we will thank him forever.

⁹But now you have rejected us and caused us to be disgraced;
when our armies march out to fight a battle, you no longer go with them.

¹⁰You have caused us to run away from our enemies,
with the result that they captured the things that belonged to us.

¹¹You have allowed us to become like sheep that were ready to be slaughtered;
you scattered us far away among other nations.

¹²It is as though you sold us, your people, to our enemies for a very small price,
although you did not gain any profit from selling us!

¹³People who live in nations near us make fun of us;
they laugh at us and deride us.

¹⁴They make jokes using the name of our country,
they shake their heads to indicate that they despise us.

¹⁵All day I am disgraced;
from seeing my face, people know that I am ashamed.

¹⁶I hear what those who sneer at me and revile me say;
I am ashamed in front of my enemies and those who want to harm me.

¹⁷All these things have happened to us
even though we have not forgotten you,
and we are not the ones who disobeyed the covenant you made with our ancestors.

¹⁸We have not stopped being loyal to you,
and we have not stopped doing what you want us to do.

¹⁹But it is as though you have allowed us to be helpless among wild animals
and you have abandoned us in a deep dark ravine.

²⁰If we had forgotten to worship our God,
or if we had spread out our hands to worship a foreign god,

²¹you certainly would have known that
because you know even what we secretly think.

²²But it is because we belong to you
that our enemies are constantly killing us.
They act toward us as though we were only sheep that they were going to slaughter.

²³So Yahweh, arise! Why are you asleep?
Get up! Do not reject us forever!

²⁴Why are you not looking at us?
Why are you forgetting that we are suffering, that our enemies are oppressing us?

²⁵We are in complete panic;
we cannot do anything; we are as good as dead.

²⁶Do something! Come and help us!
Rescue us because you love us as you promised to do.

Psalm 45

A love song written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director, to be sung to the tune "Lilies."

¹In my inner being I am aroused by something beautiful to write about,
a song that I will sing to the king.

The words of this song will be written by me, a skilled writer.

²O King, you are the most handsome man in the world,
and you always speak eloquently!

So we know that God has always blessed you.

³You who are a mighty warrior, put on your sword!
You are glorious and majestic.

⁴Ride on like a great king
to defend the truth that you speak
and the fair decisions that you make!
Because you fight in many battles,
you will learn to do deeds that your enemies will fear.

⁵Your arrows are sharp,
and they pierce the hearts of your enemies.
Soldiers of many nations will fall at your feet.

⁶The kingdom that God will give to you will remain forever.
You rule over people justly.

⁷You love right actions,
and you hate evil actions.
Therefore God, your God, has chosen you to be king
and has caused you to be happier than any other king.

⁸The perfume of various spices is on your robes.
Musicians entertain you in ivory palaces
by playing stringed instruments.

⁹Among your wives are daughters of other kings.
At your right hand stands your bride, the queen, wearing beautiful ornaments of gold that comes from Ophir.

¹⁰Now I will say something to your bride:
"Listen to me carefully!
Forget the people who live in your home country,
forget your relatives!

¹¹Because you are very beautiful,
the king will desire to be with you.

He is your master, so you must obey him.

¹²The people from the city of Tyre will bring gifts to you;
their rich people will try to persuade you to do favors for them.

¹³You, the king's bride, enter the palace
wearing beautiful robes made from gold thread."

¹⁴O king, while she is wearing a gown that has many colors,
her woman servants will lead her to you.
She will have many other young women who accompany her.

¹⁵They will be very joyful as they are led along
to enter your palace.

¹⁶Someday, your sons and your grandsons will become kings,
just as your ancestors were.
You will enable them to become rulers in many countries.

¹⁷As for me, I will enable people in every generation to remember the great things that you have done,
and people will praise you forever.

Psalm 46

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director.

¹God is the one who protects us and causes us to be strong;
he is always ready to help us when we have troubles.

²So, even if the earth shakes,
we will not be afraid.

Even if the mountains fall into the middle of the sea,

³and if the water in the sea roars and foams,
and if the hills shake violently,
we will not be afraid!

⁴Blessings that come from God are like a river that makes everyone in the city joyful, there where we worship him.
It is the city where the temple of God, who is greater than any other god, exists.

⁵God is in this city, and it will never be destroyed;
he will come to help the people in that city at dawn every day.

⁶Sometimes the people of many nations are terrified;

kingdoms are overthrown;

God speaks loudly like thunder,

and the earth melts.

⁷But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is with us;

the God whom Jacob worshiped is our refuge.

⁸Come and see the things that Yahweh does!

Come and see the things he has destroyed all over the earth.

⁹He stops wars all over the world;

he breaks bows and arrows;

he destroys spears;

he burns up shields.

¹⁰God says, "Be quiet and remember that I am God!

People of all nations will honor me.

People all over the earth will honor me."

¹¹So never forget that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is with us;

the God whom Jacob worshiped is our refuge.

Psalm 47

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director

¹You people all over the world, clap your hands!

Shout joyfully to praise God!

²Yahweh, who is much greater than any other god, is awesome;

he is a king who rules over all the world!

³He enabled us to defeat the armies of the people groups that lived in Canaan.

⁴He chose for us this land where we now live;

we Israelite people, whom he loves, are proud that we own this land.

⁵God has gone up into his temple.

The people shouted joyfully and blew trumpets as he went up.

⁶Sing songs to praise our God!

Sing to praise him!

Sing to God, our king!

⁷God is the one who rules over everything in the world;
sing a psalm to him!

⁸God sits on his sacred throne
as he rules over the people of all ethnic groups.

⁹The rulers of those people groups gather in front of God's people, the people descended from Abraham.
God has more power than the weapons of all the kings on the earth;
he is great, and all people everywhere will honor him.

Psalm 48

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah

¹Yahweh is great, and he deserves to be greatly praised in the city where he lives,
which is built on Zion, his sacred hill.

²That city on a high hill is beautiful;
it is the city where the true God, the great king, lives,
and it causes people all over the world to rejoice when they see it.

³God is in the strong towers there,
and he shows that he protects the people in that city.

⁴Many kings gathered with their armies to attack our city,

⁵but when they saw it, they were amazed;
they became terrified, and ran away.

⁶Because they were very afraid, they trembled
like a woman who is about to give birth to a child.

⁷They shook as ships sailing from Tarshish shake in a strong wind.

⁸We had heard that this city was glorious,
and now we have seen that it is.

It is the city in which Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, lives.

It is the city that God will preserve forever.

⁹God, here in your temple we think about how you love us as you promised to do.

¹⁰People all over the earth will praise you
because you rule powerfully and justly.

¹¹The people who live at Mount Zion should be happy!

The people in all the cities of Judah should rejoice
because you judge people fairly.

¹²You Israelite people should walk around Mount Zion
and count the towers there;

¹³notice the walls there and examine their strongest parts
so that you can tell your children about them.

¹⁴Say to your children, "This is the city of our God, the one who lives forever;
he will guide us during all of our lives."

Psalms 49

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director.

¹You people of all people groups, listen!

You people all over the world,

²important people and unimportant people,
rich people and poor people,
everyone, listen to what I am saying.

³For what I am thinking is very sensible,
and what I say will enable you to become wise.

⁴I think about wise words to tell you,
and while I play my harp, I explain what they mean.

⁵I do not worry when I am in trouble,
when I am surrounded by my enemies.

⁶These are evil men who trust that things will always go well for them because they are wealthy
and who boast about being very rich.

⁷They may be rich, but no one can pay God money
so that he can live forever!

No one can pay God enough so that God will allow him to continue to live

⁸because that cost is too much,
and he will never be able to pay enough.

⁹No one can pay God enough money so that he will live forever
and never die and be buried!

¹⁰We see that foolish and stupid people die,
but we see that wise people also die;
they all leave their wealth, and others inherit it.

¹¹They once had houses on land that they owned,
but now their graves are their homes forever,
the place where they will stay for all time!

¹²Even if people are great, that cannot prevent them from dying;
people all die, the same as the animals do.

¹³That is what happens to those who foolishly trust in what they have accomplished,
to those who are delighted in all that they possess.

¹⁴They are certain to die just like sheep
when a shepherd leads them away to be slaughtered.
In the morning the righteous people will rule over them,
and then those wealthy people will die and their bodies will quickly decay in their graves;
they will be where dead people are, far from their homes.

¹⁵But it is certain that God will rescue me so that I am not held fast in the place of the dead;
he will take me to himself.

¹⁶So do not be dismayed when someone becomes rich
and the houses where they live become more and more luxurious;

¹⁷for when he dies, he will take nothing with him;
his wealth will not go with him.

¹⁸While a rich person is alive, he congratulates himself,
and people praise him for being successful,

¹⁹but he will die and join his ancestors,
who will never see daylight again.

²⁰Even if someone is great, that cannot prevent him from dying;
he will die, the same as the animals do.

Psalm 50

A psalm written by Asaph

¹God, the all-powerful one, speaks;

he summons all people,
from the east to the west.

²His glory shines from Mount Zion in Jerusalem,
an extremely beautiful city.

³Our God comes to us,
and he is not silent.

A great fire is in front of him,
and a storm is around him.

⁴He comes to judge his people.
He shouts to the angels in heaven
and to the people on the earth.

⁵He says, "Summon those who faithfully worship me,
those who made a covenant with me by offering sacrifices to me."

⁶The angels in heaven declare,
"God is righteous,
and he is the supreme judge."

⁷God says, "My people, listen!
You Israelite people, listen,
as I, your God, say what you have done that is wrong.

⁸I am not rebuking you for making sacrifices to me,
for the offerings that you always burn on the altar for me.

⁹But I do not really need the bulls from your barns
and the goats from your pens that you sacrifice,

¹⁰because all the animals in the forest belong to me,
and all the cattle on a thousand hills also belong to me.

¹¹I know and own all the birds in the mountains,
and all the creatures that move around in the fields.

¹²So if I were hungry, I would not tell you to bring me some food
because everything in the world belongs to me!

¹³I do not eat the flesh of the bulls that you sacrifice,
and I do not drink the blood of the goats that you offer to me.

¹⁴The sacrifice that I really want is that you thank me
and do all that you have promised to do.

¹⁵Pray to me when you have troubles.
If you do that, I will rescue you, and then you will praise me.

¹⁶But I say this to the wicked people:
Why do you recite my commandments
or talk about the covenant that I made with you?

¹⁷For you have refused to allow me to discipline you,
and you have rejected what I told you to do.

¹⁸Every time that you see a thief, you become his friend,
and you spend much time with those who commit adultery.

¹⁹You are always talking about doing wicked things,
and you are always trying to deceive people.

²⁰You are always accusing members of your own family
and slandering them.

²¹You did all those things, and I did not say anything to you,
so you thought that I was a sinner just like you.
But now I rebuke you and accuse you, right in front of you.

²²So, all you who have ignored me, pay attention to this,
because if you do not, I will tear you to pieces,
and there will be no one to rescue you.

²³The sacrifice that truly honors me is to thank me for what I have done;
and I will save those who always do the things that I want them to."

Psalm 51

A psalm written by David for the choir director, concerning the time when the prophet Nathan rebuked David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

¹O God, act mercifully toward me
because you love me faithfully;
because you are very merciful,
forget the ways that I disobeyed you!

²Make me acceptable to you again, even though I did wrong things;
forgive the guilt of my sin and accept me.

³I say that because I know the ways that I have disobeyed you;
I cannot forget them.

⁴You, you only, are the one I have really sinned against,
and you have seen the evil things that I have done.
When you say that I am guilty, you are right,
and when you judge me, you justly say that I deserve to be punished.

⁵I have been a sinner since the day that I was born;
truly, I have been like that since my mother conceived me.

⁶What you desire is that in my inner being I desire what is true
in order that you can teach me how to act wisely.

⁷Forgive the guilt of my sins, and after that happens, I will be completely acceptable to you;
if you forgive me, then I will be absolutely right with you.

⁸Allow me to rejoice again;
you have made me immeasurably sad,
but now let me rejoice again.

⁹Do not continue to remember the sins that I have committed;
forget the evil things that I have done.

¹⁰O God, make me want to do the things that you approve of.
Make me want to do only what is right.

¹¹Do not reject me as one of your people,
and do not make your holy Spirit leave me.

¹²Make me happy again by rescuing me from my guilt,
and always help me by making me sincerely want to obey you.

¹³If you do that, I will teach other sinners what you want them to do;
they will repent and obey you.

¹⁴O God, you are the one who saves me;
forgive me for being guilty of causing someone who was not my enemy to die.
When you do that, I will sing joyfully about your being very good and righteous.

¹⁵O Yahweh, help me to speak

in order that I may praise you.

¹⁶When people only bring sacrifices to you, that does not please you.

If that were enough to please you, I would do the same.

But you are not pleased with burnt offerings alone.

¹⁷The sacrifice that you really want is for people to be truly humble and sorry for having sinned.

O God, you will not refuse that kind of sacrifice.

¹⁸O God, be good to the people who live in Jerusalem;

make them able to rebuild the city walls.

¹⁹When that happens, they will bring you the proper sacrifices:

normal animal sacrifices and sacrifices to be completely burned.

They will burn young bulls on your altar,

and you will be pleased.

Psalm 52

A psalm written by David for the choir director when Doeg went to Saul and said, "David has gone to talk with Ahimelech, the high priest."

¹You proud man, you think that you are strong;
you boast about the trouble that you make for others,
but God faithfully protects people from you every day.

²All during the day you plan to get rid of others;
what you say is like a sharp blade,
and you are always deceiving others.

³You like doing what is evil more than you like doing what is good,
and you like telling lies more than you like telling the truth.

⁴You, the one who says things to deceive people,
you like to say things that hurt people!

⁵But God will get rid of you forever;
he will grab you and drag you from your home
and take you away from this world where people are alive.

⁶When righteous people see that, they will be awestruck,
and they will laugh at what happened to you, and say,

⁷"Look what happened to the man who would not ask God to protect him;
he trusted that his great wealth would save him;
he grew more powerful by wickedly hurting other people."

⁸But I am secure because I worship in God's temple;
I am like a strong green olive tree.
I trust in God, who faithfully loves us forever.

⁹God, I will always thank you for everything you have done.
I will wait patiently because you are so good,
especially when I stand before your faithful people.

Psalm 53

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be sung using a tune called "Mahalath."

¹Only foolish people say to themselves, "There is no God!"
People who say that are corrupt; they commit terrible sins;
there is not one of them who does what is good.

²God looks down from heaven and sees humans;
he looks to see if any man is very wise
and seeks to know God.

³But everyone has turned away from God. They are depraved and do disgusting, filthy things.
No one does what is good.

⁴Will all these evil people never learn what God will do to them?

They hurt Yahweh's people with terrible violence. They had no guilt in what they did. They had the same expression on their faces as people eating bread at dinner.

And what is worse is that they never prayed to Yahweh.

⁵But someday those people will become very terrified,
although they have nothing to fear.

For God will cause those who attack you to die,
and he will scatter their bones.

They have rejected God,
so he will cause them to be defeated and completely disgraced.

⁶I wish that God would come and rescue the Israelite people!
God, when you bless your people again,

all the Israelite people, all the descendants of Jacob, will rejoice.

Psalm 54

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be accompanied by stringed instruments; it was written when the people of Ziph went to Saul and told him that David was hiding in their area.

¹God, by your power save me from my enemies,
and show people that I have not done anything that is wrong!

²God, listen to my prayer;
listen to what I say to you

³because strangers are trying to attack me;
proud men are wanting to kill me,
men who have no respect for you.

⁴But God is the one who helps me;
Yahweh defends me from my enemies.

⁵He will cause the evil things that they want to do to me to happen to them instead;
because you faithfully do what you have promised to me, destroy them.

⁶Yahweh, I will gladly give an offering to you because I want to,
and I will thank you, for you are good to me;

⁷you have rescued me from all my troubles,
and I have seen that you have defeated my enemies.

Psalm 55

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be accompanied by stringed instruments

¹God, listen to my prayer,
and do not turn away from me while I am pleading with you.

²Listen to me and answer me
because I am overwhelmed by all my troubles.

³My enemies terrify me;
wicked people oppress me.
They cause me to have great troubles;
they are angry with me, and they hate me.

⁴I am terrified,

and I am very much afraid that I will die.

⁵I am very fearful and I tremble;

I am completely terrified.

⁶I said, "I wish that I had wings like a dove!

If I had wings, I would fly away and find a place to rest.

⁷I would fly far away

and live in the wilderness.

⁸I would quickly find a safe place

where my enemies could not strike me like a strong wind and rainstorm."

⁹Lord, confuse my enemies and cause their plans to fail.

I saw them hurting others by their violence and causing riots throughout the city.

¹⁰During each day and night they march around on top of its walls,
committing crimes and causing trouble.

¹¹They destroy things everywhere.

They oppress people and defraud people in the marketplaces.

¹²If it were an enemy who was making fun of me,

I could endure it.

If it were someone who hates me, who despises me,

I could hide from him.

¹³But it is someone who is just like me, my companion,
someone who was my friend who is doing this to me.

¹⁴We previously had many good talks together;
we walked around together in God's temple.

¹⁵I desire that my enemies will go down alive
to the place where the dead people are.

I want this because they do evil things in their homes.

¹⁶But I will ask Yahweh, my God, to help me,
and he will save me.

¹⁷Each morning, noontime, and evening I tell him what I am concerned about, and I moan,
and he hears my voice.

¹⁸He saves my life and makes me safe

when I am fighting a terrible battle against my enemies.

There are many enemies coming to fight against me!

¹⁹God is the one who has ruled everything forever,

and he will put those who fought against me in their place.

He will cause my enemies to be defeated and disgraced

because they do not change their evil behavior

and because they do not have any respect for God.

²⁰My companion, whom I mentioned previously, betrayed his friends

and broke the agreement that he made with them.

²¹What he said was as easy to listen to as butter is easy to swallow,

but in his inner being he hated people;

his words were as soothing as olive oil,

but they hurt people as sharp swords do.

²²Put your troubles in Yahweh's hands,

and he will take care of you;

he will never allow disaster to destroy righteous people.

²³God, you will cause murderers and liars to die before they have lived half as long as they expect to live;

but as for me, I will trust in you.

Psalm 56

A psalm written by David for the choir director, concerning the time the Philistines seized David in Gath; to be sung using the tune "Dove on distant oaks."

¹God, act mercifully toward me because men are attacking me!

All day long an enemy presses closer and closer to me because they want to take my life.

²All day long my enemies seek to crush the life from me,

there are many enemies attacking me!

³But whenever I am afraid,

I trust in you.

⁴God, I praise you because you do what you have promised;

I trust in you, and then I am not afraid.

Ordinary humans certainly cannot harm me!

⁵All day long my enemies claim that I said things that I did not say;

they are always thinking of ways to harm me.

⁶In order to cause trouble for me, they hide

and watch everything that I do,

waiting for an opportunity to kill me.

⁷So, God, punish them for the wicked things that they are doing;

show that you are angry by defeating those people!

⁸You have counted all the times that I have been wandering alone;

it is as though you have put all my tears in a bottle

so that you can see how much I have cried.

You have counted my tears and written the number in your book.

⁹When I call out to you, my God, my enemies will be defeated;

I know that will happen because you are fighting for me.

¹⁰I praise you that you do what you have promised;

Yahweh, I will always praise you for that.

¹¹I trust in you, and as a result, I will not be afraid.

I know that humans cannot really harm me!

¹²I will bring to you the offering that I promised;

I will bring an offering to you to thank you

¹³because you have rescued me from being killed;

you have kept me from stumbling.

And so I will continue to live with God every day

in his light that gives me life.

Psalm 57

A psalm written by David for the choir director, when David went into a cave to escape from Saul; to be sung using the tune "Do not destroy."

¹God, act mercifully toward me!

Act mercifully toward me because I am coming to you to protect me.

I request you to protect me as little birds are protected under their mother's wings

until the storm is ended.

²God, you who are greater than all other gods,

I cry out to you, the one who enables me to be all that you desire.

³You will answer me from heaven and rescue me,
but you will cause those who oppress me to be defeated and disgraced!
God will always faithfully love me as he has promised me.

⁴Sometimes I am surrounded by my enemies, who are as ready to kill me as lions are to kill people;
they are like lions that chew to bits the animals that they kill.
But my enemies are human, and they have spears and arrows, not teeth;
they say false things about me.

⁵God, show in the heavens that you are very great!
Show your glory to people all over the earth!

⁶It is as if my enemies have spread a net to seize me,
and I became very distressed.
It is as if they have dug a deep pit along the path where I walk,
but they themselves fell into it!

⁷God, I am very confident in you.
I will sing to you,
and I will praise you while I sing.

⁸It is an honor to wake up and praise you.
I will arise before the sun rises
and praise you while I play my big harp or my lyre.

⁹Lord, I will thank you among all the people;
and I will sing songs of praise about you to many people groups.

¹⁰For your love for us is as great as the distance from the earth to the sky,
and your faithfulness to us goes up to the clouds.

¹¹God, show in the heavens that you are very great!
Show your glory to people all over the earth!

Psalm 58

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be sung using the tune "Do not destroy."

¹When you rulers speak, you never say what is right;
you people never justly decide disputes.

²No, in your inner beings you think only about doing what is wrong,

and you commit violent crimes everywhere in this land of Israel.

³Wicked people do wrong things and tell lies from the time that they are born.

⁴What wicked people say injures people like the venom of a snake.

They refuse to listen to commands; it is as though they were deaf cobras.

⁵As a result, like a snake that does not respond when a charmer plays a flute or when someone sings magic songs, they do not pay attention when others rebuke them.

⁶God, as for these enemies who want to attack me like young lions,
break the teeth in their mouths!

⁷Cause them to disappear as water disappears in dry ground!

Cause the arrows that they shoot to have no heads!

⁸Cause them to become like snails that disappear in the slime;
cause them to be like a baby that is born dead!

⁹I hope that you will get rid of them
as fast as thornbushes are blown away after they are cut.

¹⁰People who do what is right will rejoice when they see God punish the wicked people;
they will wash their feet in the blood of wicked people.

¹¹Then people will say, "It is true that there is a reward for righteous people;
and there is indeed a God who judges people justly here on the earth!"

Psalm 59

A psalm written by David for the choir director; when Saul, wanting to kill David, sent men to watch David's house.

¹God, save me from my enemies!

Protect me from those who want to attack me!

²Keep me safe from men who want to do what is wicked,
from men who are murderers!

³Look! They are waiting to kill me!

Fierce men have gathered to assault me.

Yahweh, they are doing that even though I have not done what is wrong!

⁴It is not because I have committed any sin against them
that they run and get ready to attack me. Please look at my situation and help me.

⁵Yahweh my God, commander of the angel armies, the one we Israelites worship,

arise and punish the people of all the nations who do not honor you;
do not act mercifully toward those wicked people who have acted treacherously toward us.

⁶They return each evening,
snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl around this city.

⁷They loudly say terrible things;
they say things that destroy as much as swords do,
because they are saying, "No one will hear us!"

⁸But Yahweh, you laugh at them.
You scoff at the people of the pagan nations.

⁹God, I have confidence in you because you are very strong;
you are my refuge.

¹⁰Because you love me, you will come to save me as you have promised;
you will allow me to watch while you defeat my enemies.

¹¹But do not kill them immediately;
it is good that my people should not forget how you punished them!
Instead, Lord, you who are like a shield that protects us,
scatter them by your power, and then defeat them.

¹²Because what they say is sinful,
allow them to be trapped for being proud.
Because they are always cursing and telling lies,

¹³because you are angry, get rid of them;
destroy them completely
so that people will know that you rule over us, your Israelite people,
and that you rule over all the earth.

¹⁴They return each evening,
snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl around this city.

¹⁵They roam around, searching for food
and if they do not find enough, they growl like dogs.

¹⁶But as for me, I will sing about your power;
every morning I will sing joyfully about your faithfully loving us.
I will sing about how you protected me when I was very distressed.

¹⁷God, you are the one who enables me to be strong;
you are my refuge;
you faithfully love me, just as you have promised in your covenant.

Psalm 60

A psalm written by David for the choir director, a psalm for teaching, to be sung using the tune “Lily of the promise.” David wrote it during the wars in northern Syria, and when Joab’s army, after returning from the battle, killed twelve thousand of the Edom people group in Salt Valley.

¹I prayed, “God, you have rejected us Israelites!
Because you have been angry with us,
you have enabled our enemies to break through our ranks.
Please enable us to be strong again!

²It was as though you made a big earthquake in which the ground split open.
So now, make us strong again,
because it is as though our country is falling apart.

³You have caused us, your people, to suffer very much;
it is as though you had taken away our strength by making us drink strong wine.

⁴But you have raised a battle flag for those who honor you.
They will show your banner when they face the enemies’ arrows.

⁵Answer our prayers and enable us by your power to defeat our enemies
so that we, the people you love, will be saved.”

⁶Then God answered my prayer and spoke from his temple, saying,
“Because I have conquered your enemies, I will divide the city of Shechem,
and I will distribute among my people the land in Succoth Valley.

⁷The region of Gilead is mine;
the people of the tribe of Manasseh are mine;
the tribe of Ephraim is like my helmet;
and the tribe of Judah is like the scepter with which I rule.

⁸The region of Moab is like my washbasin;
I throw my sandal into the region of Edom to show that it belongs to me;
I shout triumphantly because I have defeated the people of all the region of Philistia.

⁹Because I want to defeat the people of Edom,

who will lead my army to their capital city that has strong walls around it?"

¹⁰So, God, it seems that you have truly abandoned us;

it seems that you do not go with us when our armies march out to fight our enemies.

¹¹We need you to help us when we fight against our enemies

because the help that humans can give us is worthless.

¹²But with you helping us, we will win;

you will enable us to defeat our enemies.

Psalm 61

A psalm written by David for the choir director, to be accompanied by musical instruments.

¹God, listen to me

and answer my prayer.

²While I am discouraged and far from my home,

I am calling out to you.

Lead me to a place that will be like a high rock

on top of which I will be safe.

³You have been my refuge;

you have been like a strong tower

in which my enemies cannot attack me.

⁴Allow me to live close to your sacred tent all during my life!

Allow me to be safe as a little bird is safe under its mother's wings.

⁵God, you heard me when I solemnly promised to give offerings to you;

you have given to me the blessings that belong to those who have an awesome respect for you.

⁶I am the king of Israel;

please allow me to live and rule for many years,

and allow my descendants to rule also.

⁷Allow us to rule forever while you observe us;

watch over us while you faithfully love us and do for us what you promised.

⁸If you do that, I will always sing to praise you

while I offer to you each day the sacrifices that I promised to give to you.

Psalm 62

A psalm written by David for Jeduthun, the choir leader

¹God is the only one who can give me peace in my inner being,
and he is the one who saves me from my enemies.

²Only he is like a huge rock on which I can be safe;
he is like a fortress high up that my enemies cannot climb.

³When will you, my enemies, stop attacking me?
I feel that I am as weak against you as a leaning wall or a broken-down fence.

⁴My enemies plan to remove me from my important position so that people no longer honor me.
They delight in telling lies.

They bless people by what they say,
but in their inner beings they curse those people.

⁵God is the only one who gives me peace in my inner being;
he is the one whom I confidently expect to help me.

⁶Only he is like a huge rock on which I can be safe;
he is like a shelter; my enemies can never reach me there.

⁷God is the one who saves me and honors me.
He is like a huge, strong rock on which I can find shelter.

⁸You my people, always trust in him.
Tell him all your troubles
because we go to him for safety.

⁹People who are considered to be unimportant are as unreliable as a breath of air;
people who are considered to be important also really amount to nothing.
If you put them all on a scale, it would be as if they weighed less than a puff of air.

¹⁰Do not trust in money gained by extorting it from others;
do not try to gain anything by robbing others.
If you become very wealthy, do not trust in your money.

¹¹I have heard God say more than once that he is the one who really has power,

¹²and that he is the one who faithfully loves us, as he promised.

He rewards every one of us according to the deeds that we do.

Psalm 63

A psalm written by David when he was in the wilderness in Judah.

¹God, you are the God whom I worship.

I greatly desire to be with you
as a person in a dry hot wilderness greatly desires some water.

²I have been with you in your temple
In order to see that you are loving and powerful.

³You always love me, as you promised in your covenant; this is worth more than my entire life,
so I will always praise you.

⁴I will praise you all the time that I live;
I will lift up my hands to you while I pray.

⁵You fill me up and you meet every need I have.
My response to you is much like when I eat a delicious banquet of rich foods
and the food fills me.

I will have great happiness when I praise you with the words that I speak about you.

⁶While I lie on my bed, I think about you.
I think about you all during the night.

⁷For you have always helped me,
and I sing joyfully knowing that you protect me
as a bird protects her young under her wings.

⁸I follow you closely,
and your hand protects me.

⁹But those who are trying to kill me
will die and descend into the place of the dead;

¹⁰they will be killed in battles
and their corpses will be eaten by dogs.

¹¹But I, the king of Israel, will rejoice in what God has done;
and all those who ask God to confirm their word will praise him,
but he will not allow liars to say anything.

Psalm 64

A psalm written by David for the choir director.

¹God, listen to me as I tell you the things about which I am worried.

I am afraid of my enemies; please save me from them.

²Protect me from what wicked men are planning to do to me;

protect me from that group of men who do what is evil.

³The hostile things they say are like sharp swords;

their cruel words are like arrows.

⁴They are not afraid of anyone; they lie about people and slander those who have done no wrong.

They are like someone who suddenly jumps up from where he is hiding and shoots arrows at his enemies.

⁵They encourage each other about doing the evil things that they are planning to do;

they talk with each other about where they can set traps to catch people.

They say, "No one will see what we are doing

⁶because we have planned very well the things that we are going to do."

What people can think and plan in their inner beings is truly amazing!

⁷But it will be as though God will shoot his arrows at them,

and suddenly they will be wounded.

⁸Because what they say proves they are guilty, God will get rid of them.

Everyone who sees what has happened to them will shake their heads to mock them.

⁹Then everyone will be afraid to sin because of what might happen to them also;

they will tell others what God has done,

and they themselves will think much about it.

¹⁰Righteous people should rejoice because of what Yahweh has done;

they should go to him to find refuge;

and all those who honor him will praise him.

Psalm 65

A psalm written by David for the choir director.

¹God, it is right for us to praise you in Jerusalem

and to do what we have promised you that we would do

²because you answer our prayers.

People everywhere will come to you

³Our many sins are like a very heavy burden to us,
but you forgive us.

⁴How fortunate are those whom you have chosen
to always be in your temple courtyards.

We will be satisfied with all the blessings that you will give us because we worship you in your sacred temple.

⁵God, when we pray to you, you answer us and save us by doing awesome deeds;
you are the one who rescues us;
people who live in very remote places on the earth, on the other side of the oceans, trust in you.

⁶You are the one who put the mountains in their places,
showing that you are very powerful.

⁷You are the one who calms the seas when they roar,
and stop the waves from pounding on the shore;
you also calm people when they cause a lot of trouble.

⁸People who live in very remote places on the earth
are awed by the miracles that you perform;
because of what you do,
people who live far to the west and far to the east shout joyfully.

⁹You take care of the soil and send rain,
causing many good things to grow;
you fill the streams with water
and cause grain to grow.

This is what you have determined would happen.

¹⁰You send plenty of rain on the fields that have been plowed,
and you fill the furrows with water.
With showers you soften the hard clods of soil,
and you bless the soil by causing young plants to grow.

¹¹Because you bless the soil, there are very good crops at harvest season;
wherever you have gone, good crops are very abundant.

¹²The pastures in the wilderness are wet with the morning dew,
it is as though the hills are singing joyful songs.

¹³The meadows are covered with sheep and goats,

and the valleys are full of grain;
it is as though they also sing and shout joyfully.

Psalm 66

A psalm that is a song for the choir director.

¹Tell everyone on the earth
that they should sing joyfully to praise God!
²They should sing songs that say that God is very great,
and they should tell everyone that he is very glorious!
³They should say to God, "The things that you do are awesome!
Your power is very great,
with the result that your enemies cringe in front of you."

⁴Everyone on the earth will worship God,
sing to praise him,
and honor him.

⁵Come and think about what God has done!
Think about the awesome things that he has done among people.

⁶He caused the sea to become dry land,
with the result that our ancestors were able to walk right through it.
There we rejoiced because of what he had done.

⁷He rules forever by his power,
and he keeps watching all the nations to see what evil things they do.
The nations that want to rebel against him should not be proud.

⁸You people of all nations, praise our God!
Praise him loudly in order that people will hear you as you praise him.

⁹He has kept us alive,
and he has not allowed us to fall into disaster.

¹⁰God, you have tested us;
you have allowed us to experience great difficulties to make our lives become pure
as people put precious metals in a hot fire to burn out what is impure.

¹¹It is as if you allowed us to fall into traps,

and you forced us to endure difficult things that were like heavy loads to carry on our backs.

¹²You allowed our enemies to trample on us;

we experienced difficulties walking through fires and floods,

but now you have made us safe.

¹³I will bring to your temple offerings that are to be completely burned on the altar;

I will offer to you what I promised.

¹⁴When I was experiencing much trouble, I said that I would bring offerings to you if you rescued me;

and you did rescue me, so I will bring to you what I promised.

¹⁵I will bring sheep to be burned on the altar,

and I will also sacrifice bulls and goats;

when they are burning, you will be pleased as the smoke rises up to you.

¹⁶All you people who have a reverential respect for God, come and listen,

and I will tell you what he has done for me.

¹⁷I called out to him to help me,

and I praised him while I was speaking to him.

¹⁸If I had ignored the sins that I had committed,

the Lord would not have paid any attention to me.

¹⁹But because I confessed my sins, God has listened to me

and has paid attention to my prayers.

²⁰I praise God

because he has not ignored my prayers;

he continues to love me as he promised in his covenant to do.

Psalm 67

A psalm for the choir director, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

¹God, act mercifully toward us and bless us;

act kindly toward us.

²Do this in order that everyone in the world may know what you want them to do,

and the people of all nations may know that you have the power to save them.

³God, I desire that all people groups may praise you;

I want them all to praise you!

⁴I desire that the people of all nations will be glad and sing joyfully
because you judge the people groups equally,
and you guide all the nations in the world.

⁵God, I desire that the people groups may praise you;
I want them all to praise you!

⁶Good crops have grown on our land;
God, our God, has blessed us.

⁷Because God has blessed us,
I desire that all people everywhere on the earth may have an awesome respect for him.

Psalm 68

A psalm written by David for the choir director.

¹God, arise and scatter your enemies,
and cause those who hate you to run away from you.

²As wind blows smoke away,
you chase your enemies away.
As wax melts when it is near a fire,
may you cause wicked people to disappear.

³But may the righteous people be joyful;
may they rejoice when they are in God's presence;
may they be happy and very joyful.

⁴Sing to God; sing to praise him;
sing a song for him who rides in the desert plains;
his name is Yahweh; be glad when you are in his presence.

⁵God, who lives in his sacred temple, is like a father to those who are orphans,
and he is the one who protects widows.

⁶He provides families for those who have no one to live with.
He frees prisoners and enables them to be successful,
but those who rebel against him will be forced to live in a very hot and dry land.

⁷God, you led your people out of Egypt,
and then you marched with them through the desert.

⁸After you did that,

the earth shook at Mount Sinai when you appeared to your people,
and rain poured down from the sky, and your people worshiped you.

⁹You caused plenty of rain to fall there in the wilderness,
and so you enabled good crops to grow again on that land that you gave to us Israelites.

¹⁰Your people built homes there;
because you were good to them, you provided food for those who were poor.

¹¹The Lord spoke this message,
and many people took his message to other places.

¹²⁻¹³They proclaimed, "Many kings and their armies are running away from our army!"

When our army brought back to their homes the things that they captured,
the women who were at home divided up those things among themselves and among their families.

They got statues of pigeons whose wings were covered with silver
and whose feathers were covered with pure yellow gold. But some of the people stayed with the sheep and did not
go to fight in the battle. Why did you not go?

¹⁴When Almighty God scattered the enemy kings and their armies,
it reminded me of a snowstorm on Mount Zalmon!

¹⁵There is a very high mountain in the Bashan hills,
a mountain that has many peaks.

¹⁶But the people who live near that mountain should not envy those who live near Mount Zion,
the mountain on which God chose to live!
Yahweh will live there forever!

¹⁷After we defeated all our enemies,
it was as though the Lord, surrounded by many thousands of strong chariots, descended from Mount Sinai
and came into the sacred temple in Jerusalem.

¹⁸He ascended the sacred mountain where his temple is
and took with him many people who had been captured in battles;
he received gifts from the enemies whom he had defeated.
He received gifts even from those who had rebelled against him,
and Yahweh, our God, will live there in his sacred temple forever.

¹⁹Praise the Lord, who helps us carry our heavy loads every day;

he is the one who saves us.

²⁰Our God is the God who saves us;

He is Yahweh, our Lord, the one who allows us to escape from dying in battles.

²¹But God will smash the heads of his enemies,

the long-haired skulls of those who continue to behave sinfully.

²²The Lord said, "I will bring back the corpses of my enemies who were killed in Bashan,

and I will bring back those who sank deep in the ocean and drowned.

²³I will do that so that you may wash your feet in their blood,

and your dogs can also lap up some of your enemies' blood."

²⁴God, many people see you march triumphantly into your sacred temple,

celebrating that you have defeated your enemies.

You march like a king does, and a large crowd walks with you.

²⁵The singers are in front, and the people who play stringed instruments are at the rear,

and young women who are beating their tambourines are between them.

²⁶They are all singing, "You Israelite people, praise God when you gather together;

praise Yahweh, all you who are descendants of Jacob!"

²⁷First come the people of the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe,

and following them come the leaders of the tribe of Judah and their group,

and following them come the leaders of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.

²⁸You people of Israel, God made our tribes very strong.

God, help us with your power as you helped us in the past.

²⁹Show us that you are strong, there where you are in your temple in Jerusalem;

kings bring gifts to you there.

³⁰Shout as you defeat your enemies, such as those in Egypt, who are like wild animals living in the reeds.

Shout as you defeat the powerful nations, who are like herds of bulls.

Shame them; make them bow down and give you gifts.

Drive away and scatter the people groups who love to attack other nations.

³¹Then the leaders of Egypt will bring gifts to you.

then the people in Ethiopia will rush to lift up their hands to praise you.

³²You people who are citizens of kingdoms all over the world, sing to God!

Sing praises to Yahweh!

³³Sing to the God, the one who rides in the sky,
the sky that he created long ago.

Listen as he shouts with a very powerful voice.

³⁴Proclaim that God is very powerful;
he is the king that rules over Israel,
and in the skies he also shows that he is powerful.

³⁵God is awesome as he comes out of his sacred temple;
he is the God whom we Israelite people worship.
He gives power and strength to his people.
Praise God!

Psalm 69

A psalm written by David for the choir director.

¹O God, save me
because I am in great danger.
It is as though the flood water were up to my neck, and I were about to drown.

²I continue to sink in the deep mud,
and there is no solid ground for me to stand on.
I am in deep water,
and the flood is swirling around me.

³I am exhausted from calling out for help;
my throat is very dry.
Because I have cried so much as I have waited for God to help me,
my eyes are swollen from tears.

⁴Those who hate me when there is no reason to hate me
are more than the number of hairs on my head!
Those who want to get rid of me are strong,
and they tell lies about me.
They demand that I return to them things that I did not steal!

⁵O God, you see the sins that I have committed.
You know that I have foolishly disobeyed your laws.

⁶O Yahweh God, commander of the angel armies,
do not allow the wrong things that I have done
cause those who trust in you to be disappointed.

O God, whom we Israelite people worship,
do not allow me to cause them to be shamed.

⁷People have insulted me because I am devoted to you.
They have thoroughly humiliated me.

⁸Even my own older brothers act as if they do not know me;
they treat me like a foreigner.

⁹Some people have despised your temple;
but because I have tried to keep your temple holy, people have caused trouble for me.
So it is as though those who are insulting you are also insulting me.

¹⁰When I have humbled myself and fasted
to show my sadness about the disgraceful things that they have done to your temple,
they just insult me.

¹¹When I put on rough sackcloth to show that I am sad,
they laugh at me.

¹²Even the elders of the city say bad things about me.
The drunkards of the city sing disgusting songs about me.

¹³But Yahweh, I will continue praying to you.
At the time that you choose, answer me and rescue me
because you faithfully love me, as you have promised to do.

¹⁴Do not allow me to sink anymore in the mud.
Rescue me from those who hate me!
Lift me up out of these deep waters!

¹⁵Do not allow the floods to swirl around me;
do not allow the deep mud to swallow me;
keep me from sinking into the pit of death.

¹⁶O Yahweh, answer my prayer and help me
because you are good
and I can depend on your love for me.

You have not punished me for what I deserve.

I know you will listen to me!

¹⁷Do not hide yourself from me;

answer me quickly

because I am in great trouble.

¹⁸Come near to me and save me;

rescue me from my enemies.

¹⁹You know that I am insulted

and that people shame and dishonor me;

you know who all my enemies are.

²⁰Their insults have deeply offended me,

and I feel helpless.

I searched for someone who would pity me,

but there was no one.

I wanted someone to encourage me,

but there was no one.

²¹Instead, they gave me food that tasted like poison,

and when I was thirsty, they gave me sour wine to drink.

²²I hope their own food will kill them;

I hope that this will happen when they think that they are completely safe.

²³I hope that their eyes become dim so that they cannot see anything

and that their backs will become weaker and weaker.

²⁴Show them that you are very angry with them!

Because of your great anger, chase them and catch them.

²⁵Cause their towns to become abandoned;

may there be no one to live in their tents.

²⁶Do this because they persecute those whom you have punished,

they look at how those whom you have punished suffer, and they tell others about it.

²⁷Keep making a record of all their sins,

do not fail to punish them for the evil things that they have done.

²⁸Erase their names from the book containing the names of those who have eternal life;

do not include them in the list of righteous people.

²⁹As for me, I have pain and am suffering.

O God, protect me and rescue me.

³⁰When God does that, I will sing as I praise God,

and I will honor him by thanking him.

³¹My doing that will please Yahweh more than sacrificing oxen,

more than offering him full grown bulls.

³²Oppressed people will see that God has rescued me,

and they will be glad.

I desire that all who request God to help them may be encouraged.

³³Yahweh listens to those who are needy;

he does not ignore those who have suffered for him.

³⁴I desire that everything will praise God—

everything that is in heaven and on earth and all the creatures that are in the seas.

³⁵God will rescue the people of Jerusalem from their enemies,

and he will rebuild the towns that are in Judah.

His people will live there and again possess the land.

³⁶The descendants of his people will inherit it,

and those who love him will live there safely.

Psalm 70

A psalm written by David for the choir director, asking God to help David.

¹God, please save me!

Yahweh, come quickly to help me!

²Disgrace those who are happy about my troubles, those who are trying to kill me.

Chase them away; make everyone shame them, for they want to see me suffer.

³I hope that you will cause them to become dismayed and ashamed

because they have been happy about my troubles.

⁴But I hope that everyone who prays to you will rejoice because of you.

I hope that everyone who waits for you to rescue them will say,

“God is great!”

⁵As for me, I am poor and needy;
so God, come quickly to help me!
Yahweh, you are the one who saves and helps me,
so please come quickly!

Psalm 71

¹Yahweh, I have come to you to be safe;
never allow me to become ashamed.

²Because you always do what is right, help me and rescue me;
listen to me, and save me!

³Be like a huge rock on top of which I can be safe;
be like a strong fortress in which I am safe.
You have commanded your angels to rescue me.

⁴God, rescue me from wicked people,
from the power of unjust and evil men.

⁵Yahweh, my Lord, you are the one whom I confidently expect to help me;
I have trusted in you ever since I was young.

⁶I have depended on you all my life;
you have taken care of me since the day that I was born,
so I will always praise you.

⁷The manner in which you have rescued me has been an example to many people
because they realize that you have been my strong defender.

⁸I praise you all during the day,
and I proclaim that you are glorious.

⁹Now when I have become an old man, do not reject me;
do not abandon me now when I am not strong anymore.

¹⁰My enemies say that they want to kill me;
they talk together and plan how they can do that.

¹¹They say, "God has abandoned him;
so now we can pursue him and seize him
because there is no one who will rescue him."

¹²God, do not stay far away from me;

hurry to help me!

¹³Cause those who accuse me to be defeated and destroyed;

cause those who want to harm me to be shamed and disgraced.

¹⁴But as for me, I will continually and confidently expect you to do great things for me,

and I will praise you more and more.

¹⁵I will tell people that you do what is right;

all during the day I will tell people how you have saved me,

although what you have done is more than I can fully understand.

¹⁶Yahweh, my Lord, I will praise you for your mighty deeds;

I will proclaim that only you always act justly.

¹⁷God, you have taught me many things ever since I was young,

and I still tell people about your wonderful deeds.

¹⁸Now, God, when I am old and my hair is gray,

do not abandon me.

Stay with me while I continue to proclaim to my children and grandchildren.

¹⁹God, you do many righteous deeds;

it is as though they extend up to the sky.

You have done great things;

there is no one like you.

²⁰You have caused us to have many troubles and to suffer much,

but you will cause us to become strong again;

when I am almost dead, you will keep us alive.

²¹You will cause me to be greatly honored,

and you will encourage me again.

²²I will also praise you while I play my harp;

I will praise you, my God, for faithfully doing what you have promised to do.

I will play hymns to praise you, the holy God whom we Israelites worship.

²³I will shout joyfully while I sing;

with my entire inner being I will sing

because you have rescued me.

²⁴All during the day I will tell people that you act righteously
because those who wanted to harm me will have been defeated and disgraced.

Psalm 72

A psalm written by Solomon.

¹O God, enable the king whom you appointed in Israel to rule justly.

Show him how to judge matters fairly

²so that he may judge your people fairly

and that he may govern your oppressed people justly.

³I desire that all over the country—even on the hills and mountains —
people will live peacefully and righteously.

⁴Help your king to defend the poor people
and to rescue needy people and to defeat those who oppress them.

⁵I desire that your king may live as long as the sun shines,
as long as the moon shines, forever.

⁶I desire that his rule may be enjoyed by the people
as they enjoy rain on the growing crops,
as they enjoy the showers that fall on the land.

⁷I hope that people may live righteously during the years that he rules
and that the people may live peacefully and prosperously as long as the moon shines.

⁸I hope that the king of Israel may rule the people
in all the area from one sea in the east to another in the west
and from the Euphrates River to the most remote places on earth.

⁹I hope that those who live in the wilderness may bow down before him
and that his enemies may throw themselves on the ground in submission to our king.

¹⁰I hope that the king of the land of Tarshish and the kings of the islands in the sea may pay taxes to the king of Israel.

I hope that the king of Sheba to the south and the king of Seba to the southwest may bring him gifts.

¹¹I hope that all the other kings in the world may bow before the king of Israel
and that people of all nations may serve our king.

¹²He rescues poor people when they cry out for help,

and he helps those who are needy and those who have no one to help them.

¹³He pities those who are weak and needy;

he saves the people's lives.

¹⁴Our king rescues people from being oppressed and from being treated cruelly

because their lives are precious to our king.

¹⁵I hope that our king may live a long time!

I hope that he may be given gold from Sheba.

I desire that people may always pray for our king

and praise him all the time, every day.

¹⁶I hope that the fields may produce plenty of grain everywhere, even on the tops of the hills in the land where he rules,

like the grain that grows on the hills in Lebanon.

I hope that the cities in Israel will be as full of people

as the fields are full of grass.

¹⁷I desire that the name of the king may never be forgotten.

I hope that people may remember him as long as the sun shines.

I hope that all people will praise Yahweh, the God of Israel,

just as he has blessed the king of Israel.

¹⁸Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship;

he is the only one who does wonderful things.

¹⁹Praise him forever!

I desire that his glory may fill the whole world!

Amen! May it be so!

²⁰This is the end of the prayers written by David, son of Jesse.

Psalm 73

Book Three

A psalm written by Asaph

¹God truly is good to us Israelite people,

to those who, with all their inner being, want to do all that he desires.

²As for me, I almost stopped trusting in God;

I was almost guilty of committing a great sin against him

³because I saw those who proudly said that they did not need God, and I wanted to be like them.

I saw that they became wealthy even though they were wicked.

⁴Those people do not suffer from sickness;

they are always strong and healthy.

⁵They do not have the troubles that other people have;

they do not have problems as others do.

⁶So they are proud, as proud as a woman with a beautiful necklace.

They are as proud of their violent actions as some people are proud of their beautiful robes.

⁷From their inner beings pour out evil deeds,

and in their inner beings they are always thinking about more evil things to do.

⁸They scoff at other people, and they talk about doing evil things to them;

they are proud while they plan to oppress others.

⁹They say evil things about God, who is in heaven,

and they talk boastfully about things that they have done here on the earth.

¹⁰The result is that people pay attention to them

and listen to everything they say.

¹¹Wicked people say to themselves, "God will certainly not know what we have done;

people say that he is greater than any other god, but he cannot find out."

¹²That is what wicked people are like;

they never worry about anything, and they are always becoming richer.

¹³So, God, I think it is useless that I have always done what you want me to

and that I have not committed sins.

¹⁴During each day I have problems,

and every morning you punish me.

¹⁵But if I had said these things out loud in front of others,

I would have been sinning against your people.

¹⁶When I tried to think completely about these things,

it was too hard for me to understand them.

¹⁷But when I went to your temple, you spoke to me,

and I understood what will happen to the wicked people after they die.

¹⁸Now I know that you will surely put them in dangerous places
where they will fall down and die.

¹⁹They will be destroyed instantly;
they will die in terrible ways.

²⁰They will disappear as quickly as a dream disappears when a person awakes in the morning;
Lord, when you arise, you will cause them to disappear.

²¹When I felt sad in my inner being
and my feelings were hurt,

²²I was stupid and ignorant,
and I behaved like an animal toward you.

²³But I am always close to you,
and you hold my hand.

²⁴You guide me by teaching me,
and at the end of my life, you will receive me and honor me.

²⁵You are in heaven, and I belong to you;
there is nothing on this earth that I desire more than that.

²⁶My body and my mind may become very weak,
but, God, you continue to enable me to be strong;
I belong to you forever.

²⁷Those who remain far from you will be destroyed;
you will get rid of those who abandon you.

²⁸But as for me, it is wonderful to be near to God
and to have Yahweh protect me
and to proclaim to others all that he has done for me.

Psalm 74

A psalm written by Asaph

¹God, why have you abandoned us?
Will you keep rejecting us forever?
Why are you angry with us
since we are like sheep in your pasture and you are like our shepherd?

²Do not forget your people whom you chose long ago,
the people whom you freed from being slaves in Egypt and caused to become your tribe.
Do not forget Jerusalem, which is your home on this earth.

³Walk along and see where everything has been totally ruined;
our enemies have destroyed everything in the sacred temple.

⁴Your enemies shouted triumphantly in this sacred place;
they erected their banners to show they had defeated us.

⁵They cut down all the engraved objects in the temple as woodsmen cut down trees.

⁶Then they smashed all the carved wood with their axes and hammers.

⁷Then they burned your temple to the ground;
they caused that place where you were worshiped to be unfit for people to worship in.

⁸They said to themselves, "We will destroy the Israelites completely,"
and they also burned down all the other places where we gathered to worship you.

⁹All our sacred symbols are gone;
there are no prophets now,
and no one knows how long this situation will continue.

¹⁰God, how long will our enemies make fun of you?
Will they insult you?

¹¹Why do you refuse to help us?
Why do you keep your hand inside your cloak instead of using it to destroy our enemies?

¹²God, you have been our king during all the years since we came out of Egypt,
and you have enabled us to defeat our enemies in the land of Israel.

¹³By your power you caused the sea to divide;
it was as though you had smashed the heads of the rulers of Egypt who were like huge sea dragons.

¹⁴It was as though you crushed the head of the king of Egypt
and gave his body to the animals in the desert to eat.

¹⁵You caused springs and streams to flow,
and you also dried up rivers that had never dried up previously.

¹⁶You created the days and the nights,
and you put the sun and the moon in their places.

¹⁷You determined where the oceans end and the land begins,

and you created the summer season and the winter season.

¹⁸Yahweh, do not forget that your enemies laugh at you
and that it is foolish people who despise you.

¹⁹Do not abandon your helpless people into the hands of their cruel enemies;
do not forget your suffering people.

²⁰Continue thinking about the covenant that you made with us;
remember that there are violent people in every dark place on the earth.

²¹Do not allow your oppressed people to be disgraced;
help those poor and needy people in order that they will again praise you.

²²God, arise and defend yourself by defending your people!
Do not forget that foolish people laugh at you all during the day!

²³Do not forget that your enemies shout angrily at you;
the uproar that they make while they oppose you never stops.

Psalm 75

A psalm written by Asaph for the choir director, to be sung using the tune 'Do not destroy'

¹We give thanks to you;
our God, we thank you.
You are close to us,
and we proclaim to others the wonderful things that you have done for us.

²You have said, "I have appointed a time when I will judge people,
and I will judge everyone fairly.

³When the earth shakes
and all the creatures on the earth tremble,
I am the one who will keep its foundations steady.

⁴I say to people who boast, 'Stop bragging!'
and I say to wicked people, 'Do not proudly do things to show how great you are!'"

⁵Do not be arrogant,
and do not speak so boastfully!

⁶The one who judges people does not come from the east or from the west,
and he does not come from the desert.

⁷God is the one who judges people;
he shames and punishes some, and he honors others.

⁸It is as though Yahweh held a cup in his hand;
it is filled with wine that has spices mixed in it to cause those who drink it to become more drunk;
and when Yahweh pours it out, he will force all the wicked people to drink it;
they will drink every drop of it; yes, he will punish them fully.

⁹But as for me, I will never stop saying what the God whom Jacob worshiped has done;
I will never stop singing to praise him.

¹⁰He promises this: "I will destroy the power of wicked people,
but I will increase the power of righteous people."

Psalm 76

A psalm written by Asaph for the choir director, to be accompanied by stringed instruments

¹God has made the people in Judah to know him;
the Israelite people honor him.

²In Jerusalem is where he resides;
he lives on Mount Zion.

³There he broke the flaming arrows that his enemies shot,
and he also broke their shields and swords and other weapons that they used in battles.

⁴God, you are powerful! You are like a great king
as you return from the mountains where you defeated your enemies.

⁵Their brave soldiers were killed, and then those who killed them took away everything that those soldiers had.
Those enemies died;
indeed, none of them were able to fight any longer.

⁶When you, the God whom Jacob worshiped, rebuked your enemies,
their horses and their riders fell down dead.

⁷Truly, you cause everyone to be afraid.
When you are angry and you punish people, no one can endure it.

⁸From heaven you proclaimed that you would judge people,
and then everyone on the earth was afraid and did not say anything more

⁹when you arose to declare that you would punish wicked people

and rescue all those whom they had oppressed.

¹⁰When you punish those with whom you are angry, your people will praise you,
and your enemies who survive will worship you on your festival days.

¹¹So give to Yahweh the offerings that you promised to give to him;
all the people of nearby people groups should also bring gifts to him, the one who is awesome.

¹²He humbles the leaders,
and terrifies all the kings.

Psalm 77

A psalm written by Asaph for Jeduthun, the choir director

¹I will cry out to God;
I will cry aloud to him, and he will listen to me.

²At the time that I had trouble, I prayed to the Lord;
all during the night I lifted up my hands while I prayed,
but nothing could comfort me.

³When I thought about God, I despaired;
when I meditated about him, I grew discouraged.

⁴All during the night he prevented me from sleeping;
I was so worried that I did not know what to say.

⁵I thought about days that had passed;
I remembered what had happened in previous years.

⁶I spent all the night thinking about things;
I meditated, and this is what I asked myself:

⁷"Will the Lord always reject me?
Will he never again be pleased with me?

⁸Has he stopped faithfully loving me?
Will he not do for me what he promised to do?

⁹God promised to act mercifully toward me; has he forgotten that?
Because he is angry with me, has he decided not to be kind to me?"

¹⁰I said, "What causes me to be sad the most is that
it seems that God, who is greater than any other god, is no longer using his power for us."

¹¹But then, Yahweh, I recall your great deeds;
I remember the wonderful things that you did in the past.

¹²I meditate on all that you have done,
and I think about your mighty acts.

¹³God, everything that you do is amazing;
there is certainly no god who is great like you are!

¹⁴You are God, the one who performs miracles;
you showed to the people of many people groups that you are powerful.

¹⁵By your power you rescued your people from Egypt;
you saved those who were descendants of Jacob and his son Joseph.

¹⁶It was as though the waters saw you and became very afraid,
and even the deepest part of the water shook.

¹⁷Rain poured down from the clouds;
it thundered very loudly,
and lightning flashed in all directions.

¹⁸Thunder crashed in the whirlwind—your voice!
Lightning lit up,
and the earth shook violently.

¹⁹Then you walked through the sea
in a path that you made through the deep water,
but your footprints could not be seen.

²⁰You led your people as a shepherd leads his flock of sheep
while Moses and Aaron were the leaders of your people.

Psalm 78

A psalm written by Asaph

¹My friends, listen to what I am going to teach you;
pay careful attention to what I will say.

²I am going to give you some sayings that wise people have said.
They will be sayings about things that happened long ago,
things that were difficult to understand.

³These are things that we have heard and known previously,
things that our parents and grandparents told us.

⁴We will tell these things to our children,
but we will also tell our grandchildren
about Yahweh's power and the glorious things that he has done.

⁵He gave laws and commandments to the Israelite people,
those who are the descendants of Jacob,
and he told our ancestors to teach them to their children.

⁶He commanded this so that their children would also know them
and so that they would teach them to their own children.

⁷In that way, they also would trust in God
and would not forget the things that he has done;
instead, they would obey his commandments.

⁸They would not be like their ancestors,
who were very stubborn and kept rebelling against God;
they did not continue firmly trusting in God,
and they did not worship him alone.

⁹The soldiers of the tribe of Ephraim had bows and arrows,
but they ran away from their enemies on the day that they fought with their enemies.

¹⁰They did not do what they had agreed with God that they would do;
they refused to obey his laws.

¹¹They forgot what he had done;
they forgot about the miracles that they had seen him perform.

¹²While our ancestors were watching,
God performed miracles in the area around the city of Zoan in Egypt.

¹³Then he caused the Sea of Reeds to divide,
causing the water on each side to pile up like a wall,
with the result that our ancestors walked through it on dry ground.

¹⁴He led them by a bright cloud during the day
and by a fiery light during the night.

¹⁵He split rocks open in the wilderness

and gave to our ancestors plenty of water from deep inside the earth.

¹⁶He caused a stream of water to flow from the rock;
the water flowed like a river.

¹⁷But our ancestors continued to sin against God;
in the wilderness they rebelled against the one who is greater than any other god.

¹⁸By demanding that God give them the food that they desired,
they tried to find out if he would always do what they requested him to do.

¹⁹They insulted God by saying, "Can God supply food for us here in this desert?"

²⁰It is true that he struck the rock,
with the result that water gushed out,
but can he also provide bread and meat for us, his people?"

²¹So when Yahweh heard that, he became very angry,
and he sent a fire to burn up some of his Israelite people.

²²He did that because they did not trust in him,
and they did not believe that he would rescue them.

²³But God spoke to the sky above them
and commanded it to open like a door,

²⁴and then food fell down like rain,
food that they named "manna."

God gave them grain from heaven.

²⁵So the people ate the food that angels eat,
and God gave to them all the manna that they wanted.

²⁶Later, he caused the wind to blow from the east,
and by his power he also sent wind from the south,

²⁷and the wind brought birds
which were as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore.

²⁸God caused those birds to fall in the middle of their camp.
There were birds all around their tents.

²⁹So the people cooked the birds and ate the meat; their stomachs were full
because God had given them what they wanted.

³⁰But they had not yet eaten all that they wanted.

³¹At that point, God was still very angry with them,
and he caused their strongest men to die;
he got rid of many of the finest young Israelite men.

³²In spite of all this, the people continued to sin;
in spite of all the miracles that God had performed,
they still did not trust that he would take care of them.

³³So he made them terrified all their lives;
he made them die young.

³⁴Whenever God caused some of the Israelites to die,
the others would repent;
they would be sorry and seriously ask God to save them.

³⁵They would remember that God was like a huge rock on which they would be safe,
and that he, who was greater than any other god, was the one who protected them.

³⁶But they tried to deceive God by what they said;
their words were all lies.

³⁷They were not loyal to him;
they ignored the covenant that he had made with them.

³⁸But God acted mercifully toward his people.

He forgave them for having sinned
and did not get rid of them.
Many times he refrained from becoming angry with them
and restrained himself from furiously punishing them.

³⁹He remembered that they were only humans who die,
humans who disappear as quickly as a wind that blows by and then is gone.

⁴⁰Many times our ancestors rebelled against God in the wilderness
and made him very sad.

⁴¹Many times they did evil things to find out if they could do those things without God punishing them.
They frequently caused the holy God of Israel to become angry.

⁴²They forgot about his great power,
and they forgot about the time when he rescued them from their enemies.

⁴³They forgot about when he performed many miracles

in the area near the city of Zoan in Egypt.

⁴⁴He caused the Nile River to become red like blood
so that the people of Egypt had no water to drink.

⁴⁵He sent among the people of Egypt swarms of flies that bit them,
and he sent frogs that ate up everything.

⁴⁶He sent locusts to eat their crops
and the other things that grew in their fields.

⁴⁷He sent hail that destroyed the grapevines,
and he sent more hail that ruined the figs on the sycamore trees.

⁴⁸He sent hail that killed their cattle
and lightning that killed their sheep and cows.

⁴⁹Because God was fiercely angry with the people of Egypt,
he caused them to be very distressed.

The disasters that struck them were like a group of angels that destroyed everything.

⁵⁰He did not lessen his anger with them,
and he did not spare their lives;
he sent a plague that killed many of them.

⁵¹In that plague he caused all the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt to die.

⁵²Then he led his people out of Egypt as a shepherd leads his sheep,
and he guided them while they walked through the wilderness.

⁵³He led them safely, and they were not afraid,
but their enemies were drowned in the sea.

⁵⁴Later he brought them to Canaan, his sacred land,
to Mount Zion,
and by his power he enabled them to conquer the people who were living there.

⁵⁵He expelled the people groups while his people were advancing;
he assigned part of the land for each tribe to possess,
and he gave the houses of those people to the Israelites.

⁵⁶However, the Israelites rebelled against God, who is greater than any other God,
and they did many evil things to see if they could do those things without God punishing them;
they did not obey his commandments.

⁵⁷Instead, as their ancestors did, they rebelled against God and were not loyal to him;
they were as unreliable as a bow that breaks when you try to shoot with it.

⁵⁸Because they worshiped carved images of their gods on the tops of hills,
they caused God to become angry.

⁵⁹He saw what they were doing and became very angry,
so he rejected the Israelite people.

⁶⁰He no longer appeared to them at Shiloh
in the sacred tent where he had lived among them.

⁶¹He allowed their enemies to capture the sacred chest,
which was the symbol of his power and his glory.

⁶²Because he was angry with his people,
he allowed their enemies to kill them.

⁶³Young men were killed in battles,
with the result that the young women had no one to marry.

⁶⁴Many priests were killed by their enemies' swords,
and the people did not allow the priests' widows to mourn.

⁶⁵Later, it was as though the Lord awoke from sleeping;
he was like a strong man who became angry because he drank a lot of wine.

⁶⁶He pushed his enemies back
and caused them to be very ashamed for a long time
because they had been defeated.

⁶⁷But he did not set up his tent where the people of the tribe of Ephraim lived;
he did not choose their area to do that.

⁶⁸Instead he chose the area where the tribe of Judah lived;
he chose Mount Zion, which he loves.

⁶⁹He decided to have his temple built there, high up, like his home in heaven;
he caused it to be firm, like the earth,
and intended that his temple would last forever.

⁷⁰He chose David, who served him faithfully,
and took him from the pastures

⁷¹where he was taking care of his father's sheep,

and appointed him to be the leader of the Israelites,
the people who would always belong to God.

⁷²David took care of the Israelite people sincerely and wholeheartedly,
and he guided them skillfully.

Psalm 79

A psalm written by Asaph

¹God, other people groups have invaded your own land.

They have desecrated your temple,
and they have destroyed all the buildings in Jerusalem.

²Instead of burying the corpses of your people whom they killed,
they allowed the vultures to eat the flesh of those corpses,
and they also allowed wild animals to eat the corpses of your people.

³When they killed your people,
your people's blood flowed like water through the streets of Jerusalem,
and there was almost no one left to bury their corpses.

⁴The people groups that live in countries that surround our land insult us;
they laugh at us and mock us.

⁵Yahweh, how long will this continue?
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will your anger be like a fire burning within you?

⁶Instead of being angry with us,
be angry with the people groups that do not know you!
Be angry with kingdoms whose people do not pray to you

⁷because they have killed Israelite people
and they have ruined your country.

⁸Do not punish us because of the sins that our ancestors committed!
Act mercifully toward us now
because we are very discouraged.

⁹God, you have saved us many times,
so help us now;

rescue us and forgive us for having sinned
so that other people will honor you.

¹⁰It is not right that the other people groups say about us,

“If their God is very powerful, why does he not help them?”

Allow us to see you punishing the people of other nations in return for their shedding our blood
and killing many of us, your people.

¹¹Listen to your people groaning while they are in prison,

and by your great power, free those whom our enemies say they will certainly execute.

¹²In return for their having often insulted you,

punish them seven times as much!

¹³After you do that, we, whom you take care of as a shepherd takes care of his sheep, will continue praising you;

we will continue to praise you from generation to generation forever.

Psalm 80

A psalm written by Asaph for the choir director, to be sung using the tune ‘Lilies of the covenant’

¹Yahweh, you who lead us as a shepherd leads his flock of sheep,

you who sit on your throne in the Very Holy Place in the temple, above the figures of winged creatures,
come and do powerful things for us Israelite people.

²Show yourself to the people of the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh!

Show us that you are powerful

and come and rescue us!

³God, cause our nation to be strong like it was before;

act kindly toward us so that we may be saved from our enemies!

⁴Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

how long will you be angry with us, your people, when we pray to you?

⁵It is as though the only food and drink that you have given us is a cup full of our tears!

⁶You have allowed the people groups that surround us to argue with each other to decide which part of our land
each of them will take;

they laugh at us.

⁷God, Commander of the angel armies,

make our nation strong as it was before!

Act kindly toward us so that we may be saved!

⁸Our ancestors were like a grapevine that you brought out of Egypt;
you drove out the other people groups from this land,
and you put your people in their land.

⁹As people clear ground to plant a grapevine,
you cleared out the people who were living in this land for us to live in it.
As the roots of a grapevine go deep down into the ground and spread,
you enabled our ancestors to prosper and start living in towns all over this land.

¹⁰As huge grapevines cover the hills with their shade
and as their branches are taller than big cedar trees,

¹¹your people ruled all of Canaan, from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Euphrates River in the east.

¹²So why have you abandoned us
and allowed our enemies to tear down our walls?
You are like someone who tears down the fences around his vineyard,
so that all the people who pass by can steal the grapes;

¹³wild pigs can trample the vines,
and wild animals can also eat the grapes.

¹⁴You who are the commander of the angel armies, turn to us!

Look down from heaven and see what is happening to us!

Come and rescue us who are like your grapevine,

¹⁵who are like the young vine that you planted and caused to grow!

¹⁶Our enemies have torn down and burned everything in our land;
look at them angrily and get rid of them!

¹⁷But strengthen us people whom you have chosen,
us Israelite people, whom you previously caused to be very strong.

¹⁸When you do that, we will never turn away from you again;
revive us, and then we will praise you.

¹⁹Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, restore us;
act kindly toward us and rescue us from our enemies!

Psalm 81

A psalm written by Asaph for the choir director

¹Sing songs to praise God, who enables us to be strong when we fight our enemies;
shout joyfully to God, whom we descendants of Jacob worship!

²Start playing the music, and beat the tambourines;
play nice music on the harps and lyres.

³Blow the trumpets during the festival to celebrate each new moon,
each time the moon is full, and during our other festivals.

⁴Do that because that is a decree for us Israelite people;
it is a command that God made for the descendants of Jacob.

⁵He made it a law at the time when God led the descendants of Joseph out of the land of Egypt.
I heard a voice I did not recognize, and it said:

⁶"After the rulers of Egypt forced you Israelites to work as slaves,
I took those heavy burdens off your backs,
and I enabled you to lay down those heavy baskets of bricks that you were carrying.

⁷When you were greatly distressed, you called out to me, and I rescued you;
I answered you out of a thundercloud.
Later I tested whether you would trust me to give you water when you were in the desert at Meribah.

⁸You who are my people, listen while I warn you!
I wish that you Israelite people would pay attention to what I say to you!

⁹You must not have any idols of other gods among you;
you must never bow to worship any of them!

¹⁰I am Yahweh, your God;
It was not any of those gods who brought you out of Egypt;
I am the one who did it!
So request what you want me to do for you, and I will do it.

¹¹But my people would not listen to me;
they would not obey me.

¹²So because they were very stubborn,
I allowed them to do whatever they wanted to do.

¹³I wish that my people would listen to me,
that the Israelite people would behave as I want them to do.

¹⁴If they did that, I would quickly defeat their enemies;
I would strike dead those who are oppressing them.
¹⁵Then all those who hate me would cringe before me,
and then I would punish them forever.
¹⁶But I would give you Israelites very good wheat,
and I would fill your stomachs with wild honey.”

Psalm 82

A psalm written by Asaph

¹God stands in heaven in a meeting of all the spirits whom he has placed in charge of what he created.
He tells them that he has decided this:
²“You must stop judging people unfairly;
you must no longer make decisions that favor wicked people!
³You must defend people who are poor and orphans;
you must act fairly toward those who are needy and those who have no one to help them.
⁴Rescue them from the power of the wicked people!”
⁵Those rulers do not know or understand anything!
They are very corrupt,
and as a result of their corrupt behavior,
it is as though the foundation of the world is being shaken!
⁶I previously said to them, “You think you are gods!
It is as though you are all my sons,
⁷but you will die as people do;
your lives will end as the lives of all rulers end.”
⁸God, arise and judge everyone on the earth
because all the people groups belong to you!

Psalm 83

A psalm which is a song written by Asaph

¹God, do not continue to be silent!
Do not be quiet and say nothing

²because your enemies are rioting against you;
those who hate you are rebelling against you!

³They are secretly planning to do things to harm us, your people;
they are conspiring together against the people whom you protect.

⁴They say, "Come, we must destroy their nation
so that no one will remember that Israel ever existed!"

⁵They have agreed on what they want to do to destroy Israel,
and they have agreed to attack you together.

⁶Your enemies are the people who live in the tents of Edom—
the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, they conspire together with ⁷the people of Gebal, and the Ammonites, and
the Amalekites,
and the Philistines, and the people of the city of Tyre.

⁸The people of Assyria have joined them;
they are strong allies of the Moab and Ammon people groups, who are descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot.

⁹God, do to those people things as you did to the Midian people group,
as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon.

¹⁰You destroyed them at the town of Endor,
and their corpses lay on the ground and decayed.

¹¹Do to them things like you did to kings Oreb and Zeeb;
defeat their leaders like you defeated Zebah and Zalmunna,

¹²who said, "We will take for ourselves the land that the Israelites say belongs to God!"

¹³My God, cause them to disappear quickly like whirling dust,
like chaff that the wind blows away!

¹⁴As a fire completely burns a forest
and as flames burn in the mountains,

¹⁵expel them with your storms
and cause them to be terrified by your big storms!

¹⁶Cause them to be very ashamed
so that they will admit that you are very powerful.

¹⁷Cause them to be forever disgraced because of being defeated,
and cause them to die while they are still disgraced.

¹⁸Cause them to know that you, whose name is Yahweh,
are the supreme ruler over everything on the earth.

Psalm 84

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director

¹Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,
your temple is very beautiful!

²I would like to be there;
Yahweh, I desire that very much.

With all my inner being I sing joyfully to you, the all-powerful God.

³Even sparrows and swallows have built nests near your temple;
they take care of their young babies near the altars where people offer sacrifices to you,
Commander of the angel armies, my king and my God.

⁴How fortunate are those who are always in your temple,
constantly singing to praise you.

⁵How fortunate are those whom you make strong,
those who desire very much to make the trip up to Mount Zion.

⁶While they travel through the dryValley of Tears,
you cause it to become a place where there are springs of water,
where the rains in the autumn fill the valley with water, a blessing from you.

⁷As a result, those who travel through there become stronger
knowing that they will appear in your presence on Mount Zion.

⁸Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, listen to my prayer;
God, whom we descendants of Jacob worship, hear what I am saying!

⁹God, act kindly toward our king, the one who protects us,
the one whom you have chosen to rule us.

¹⁰For me, spending one day in your temple
is better than spending a thousand days somewhere else;
standing at the entrance to your temple, ready to go inside,
is better than living in the tents where wicked people live.

¹¹Yahweh our God is like the sun that shines on us and like a shield that protects us;

he acts favorably toward us and honors us.

Yahweh does not refuse to give any good thing to those who do what is right.

¹²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

how fortunate are those who trust in you!

Psalm 85

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah for the choir director

¹Yahweh, you have acted kindly toward us people who live in this land;

you have enabled us Israelite people to become prosperous again.

²You forgave us, your people, for the sins that we had committed;

you pardoned us for all our sins.

³You stopped being angry with us

and turned away from severely punishing us.

⁴Now, God, the only one who can save us, stop being angry with us

and help us.

⁵Will you continue to be angry with us forever?

⁶Please enable us to prosper again

so that we, your people, will rejoice about what you have done for us.

⁷Yahweh, by rescuing us from our troubles,

show us that you faithfully love us.

⁸I want to listen to what Yahweh our God says

because he promises that he will enable us, his people, to live peacefully

if we do not return to doing foolish things.

⁹He is surely ready to save those who have an awesome respect for him,

so that his glory will remain in our land.

¹⁰When that happens, he will both faithfully love us and faithfully do for us what he promised to do;

we will act righteously, and he will give us peace,

which will be like a kiss that he gives us.

¹¹Here on earth, we will be loyal to God,

and from heaven, God will act justly toward us.

¹²Yes, Yahweh will do good things for us,

and there will be great harvests in our land.

¹³Yahweh always acts righteously;
he acts righteously wherever he goes.

Psalm 86

A prayer written by David

¹Yahweh, listen to what I say and answer me
because I am weak and needy.

²Prevent me from dying now because I am loyal to you;
save me because I serve you and I trust in you, my God.

³Lord, act kindly toward me
because I cry out to you all during each day.

⁴Lord, cause me to be glad,
because I pray to you.

⁵Lord, you are good to us, and you forgive us;
you faithfully love very much all those who pray to you.

⁶Yahweh, listen to my prayer;
hear me when I cry out to you to help me.

⁷When I have troubles, I call out to you
because you answer me.

⁸Lord, among all the gods whom the heathen nations worship,
there is no one like you;
not one of them has done the great things that you have done.

⁹Lord, someday people from all the nations that you have established will come and bow down in front of you,
and they will praise you.

¹⁰You are great, and you do wonderful things;
only you are God.

¹¹Yahweh, teach me what you want me to do
so that I may conduct my life according to what you say, all of which is right.
Cause me to have an awesome respect for you with all my inner being.

¹²Lord, my God, I will thank you with all my inner being,

and I will praise you forever.

¹³You faithfully love me very much as you have promised;
you have prevented me from dying and going to the place where dead people are.

¹⁴But God, proud men are trying to attack me;
a gang of cruel men are wanting to kill me;
they are men who do not have any respect for you.

¹⁵But Lord, you always act mercifully and kindly;
you do not become angry quickly;
you faithfully love us very much
and always do for us what you have promised to do.

¹⁶Look down toward me and act mercifully to me;
cause me to be strong and save me,
the one who serves you faithfully as my mother did.

¹⁷Yahweh, do something to show me that you are being good to me
so that those who hate me will see that you have encouraged me and helped me;
as a result, they will be ashamed.

Psalm 87

A psalm written by one of the descendants of Korah

¹The city is established on his holy mountain.
²Yahweh loves that city, Jerusalem, more than he loves any other place in Israel.
³All you people in Jerusalem,
other people say wonderful things about your city.
⁴And Yahweh said, "I will talk of Rahab and Babyon
and the people there who know me.
There are some who know me among the people of Egypt and Babylonia,
and they live in the lands of Philistia and Tyre and Ethiopia,
and they will say, 'Our home is Jerusalem and our land is Zion.'"
⁵Concerning Zion, people will say,
"All of these people who were born far away,
they call Jerusalem their home,

and Almighty God will cause that city to remain strong.”

⁶Yahweh will write a list of the names of the people of various groups who belong to him,
and he will say that he considers them all to be citizens of Jerusalem.

⁷They will all dance and sing, saying,
“Jerusalem is the source of all our blessings.”

Psalm 88

A psalm that expresses sadness, written for the choir director by Zerah’s son Heman, one of the descendants of Korah

¹Yahweh God, you who rescue me, all during each day I call out to you to help me,
and I cry out to you during each night also.

²Listen to my prayer
while I cry out to you for help!

³I have experienced many troubles,
and I am about to die and go where dead people are.

⁴Because I have no more strength,
other people believe that I will soon die.

⁵I am like a corpse that has been abandoned;
I am like dead people who lie in their graves,
people who have been completely forgotten
because you do not take care of them anymore.

⁶It is as though you have thrown me into a deep, dark pit,
into a place where they throw corpses.

⁷It seems as though you are very angry with me,
and it is as though you have crushed me as ocean waves crash down on people.

⁸You have caused my friends to avoid me;
I have become repulsive to them.
It is as though I were in a prison and cannot escape.

⁹My eyes cannot see well because I cry very much.
Yahweh, every day I call out to you to help me;
I lift up my hands to you while I pray.

¹⁰You certainly do not perform miracles for dead people!

Their spirits do not arise to praise you!

¹¹Corpses in the grave certainly do not tell about your faithfully loving us,

and in the place where people are finally destroyed,

no one tells about what you faithfully do for us.

¹²No one in the deep, dark pit ever sees the miracles that you perform,

and no one in the place where people have been completely forgotten tells about your being good to us.

¹³But as for me, Yahweh, I cry out to you to help me;

each morning I pray to you.

¹⁴Yahweh, why do you reject me?

Why do you turn away from me?

¹⁵All the time since I was young, I have suffered and have often almost died;

I am in despair because of enduring the terrible things that you have done to me.

¹⁶I feel that you have crushed me because of your being angry with me;

the terrible things that you are doing to me are almost destroying me.

¹⁷It is as though they surround me like a flood;

they are closing in on me from all sides.

¹⁸You have caused even my friends and others whom I love to avoid me,

and it is as though the only friend that I have is darkness.

Psalm 89

A song written by Ethan, from the clan of Ezra

¹Yahweh, I will sing forever about the ways you faithfully love me;

people not yet born will hear that you faithfully do all that you have promised.

²I will tell people that you will faithfully love us forever,

and that your being faithful to do what you have promised is as permanent as the sky.

³Yahweh said, "I have made an agreement with David, whom I chose to serve me.

I have made this solemn agreement with him:

⁴I will enable various ones of your descendants to always be kings;

the line of kings descended from you will never end."

⁵Yahweh, I desire that all those beings who are in heaven will praise you for the wonderful things that you do,

and that all your holy angels will sing about how you faithfully do what you promise.

⁶There is no one in heaven who can be compared with you, Yahweh.

There are no angels in heaven who are equal to you.

⁷When your holy angels gather together,

they declare that you must be revered;

they say that you are more awesome than all the angels that surround your throne!

⁸O Yahweh God, commander of the angel armies, there is no one who is as powerful as you are;

your faithfully doing all that you promise is like a cloak that always surrounds you.

⁹You rule over the powerful seas;

when their waves rise up, you calm them.

¹⁰You are the one who crushed and killed the great sea monster named Rahab.

You defeated and scattered your enemies with your great power.

¹¹The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours;

everything on the earth is yours because you created it all.

¹²You created everything from the north to the south.

Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon joyfully praise you.

¹³You are very powerful;

you are extremely strong.

¹⁴You rule over people fairly and justly;

you are always faithfully loving us and doing what you promised.

¹⁵Yahweh, how fortunate are those who worship you with joyful shouts in their festivals,

who live knowing that you are always watching over them.

¹⁶Every day, throughout the day, they rejoice in what you have done,

and they praise you for being very good to them.

¹⁷You give us your glorious strength;

because you act in our favor, we defeat our enemies.

¹⁸Yahweh, you gave us the one who protects us;

you, the holy God whom we Israelites worship, he gave us our king.

¹⁹Long ago you spoke in a vision to one of your servants, saying,

"I have crowned a famous soldier;

I chose him from among all the people to be a king.

²⁰That man is David, the one who will serve me faithfully,
and I anointed him with sacred olive oil to make him king.

²¹My strength will always be with him;
with my power, I will make him strong.

²²His enemies will never find ways to outwit him,
and wicked people will never defeat him.

²³I will crush his enemies in front of him
and get rid of those who hate him.

²⁴I will always be loyal to him and faithfully love him
and enable him to defeat his enemies.

²⁵I will cause his kingdom to include all the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

²⁶He will say to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, the one who protects and saves me.'

²⁷I will give him the rights as my firstborn son;
he will be the greatest king on the earth.

²⁸I will always be loyal to him,
and my agreement to bless him will last forever.

²⁹I will establish a line of his descendants that will never end,
various ones of his descendants will always be kings.

³⁰But if some of his descendants disobey my laws
and do not behave as my commands say that they should,

³¹if they disregard my requirements
and do not do the right things that I have told them to do,

³²I will punish them severely
and cause them to suffer for doing wrong.

³³But I will not stop faithfully loving David,
and I will always do what I promised him.

³⁴I will not break the agreement that I made with him;
I will not change even one word that I spoke to him.

³⁵Once I made a solemn promise to David, and that will never change;
because I am God, I will never lie to David.

³⁶I promised that the line of kings descended from him will go on forever;
it will last as long as the sun shines.

³⁷That line will be as permanent as the moon
that is always watching everything here on earth.”

³⁸But Yahweh, now you have rejected him!
You are very angry with the king whom you appointed.

³⁹It seems that you have broken the agreement that you made with your servant, David;
it seems as though you have thrown his crown into the dust.

⁴⁰You have torn down the walls that protect his city
and allowed all his forts to become ruins.

⁴¹All those who pass by plunder his possessions;
his neighbors laugh at him.

⁴²You have enabled his enemies to defeat him;
you have made them all happy.

⁴³You have caused his sword to become useless,
and you have not helped him in his battles.

⁴⁴You have caused his splendor to end
and knocked his throne to the ground.

⁴⁵You have caused him to become old when he is still young
and caused him to be very shamed.

⁴⁶O Yahweh, how long will this continue?
Will you hide yourself from us forever?
How long will your anger against us burn like a fire?

⁴⁷Do not forget that life is very short;
Do not forget that you have created all of us to die uselessly.

⁴⁸No one can keep on living and never die;
no one can bring himself back from the place of the dead.

⁴⁹Yahweh, you promised long ago
that you would faithfully love me;
why are you not doing that?
You solemnly promised this to David!

⁵⁰Yahweh, do not forget that people insult us!

Heathen people curse me!

⁵¹Yahweh, your enemies insult your chosen king!

They insult him wherever he goes.

⁵²I hope that Yahweh will be praised forever!

Amen! May it be so!

Psalm 90

Book Four

A prayer by the prophet Moses

¹Lord, you have always been like a home for us.

²Before you created the mountains,
before you formed the earth and everything that is in it,
you were eternally God,
and you will be God forever.

³When people die, you cause their corpses to become soil again;
you change their corpses to become dirt like that from which the first man was created.

⁴When you consider time,
a thousand years are as short as one day that passes;
you consider that they are as short as a few hours in the night.

⁵You cause people to die suddenly;
they live only a short time as a dream lasts only a short time.
They are like grass that grows up.

⁶In the morning the grass sprouts and grows well,
but in the evening it dries up and completely withers.

⁷Similarly, because of the sins that we commit, you become angry with us;
you terrify us and then you destroy us.

⁸It is as though you place our sins in front of you;
you spread out even our secret sins where you can see them.

⁹Because you are angry with us, you cause our lives to end;
the years that we live pass as quickly as a sigh does.

¹⁰People live for only seventy years;

if they are strong, some of them live for eighty years.

But even during good years we have much pain and troubles;

our lives soon end, and we die.

¹¹No one has really experienced the powerful things you can do to them when you are angry with them, and people are not afraid that you will punish them because of your being angry with them.

¹²So teach us to realize that we live for only a short time

in order that we may use our time wisely.

¹³Yahweh, how long will you be angry with us?

Pity us who serve you.

¹⁴Each morning, show us that it is enough for us if you love us faithfully as you have promised you would do.

Show us this so that we may shout joyfully and be happy all during the years that we live.

¹⁵Cause us to be now as happy for as many years as you afflicted us and we experienced troubles.

¹⁶Enable us to see the great things that you do,

and enable our descendants to see your glorious power also.

¹⁷Lord, our God, give us your blessings

and enable us to be successful;

yes, cause us to be successful in everything that we do!

Psalms 91

¹Those who live under the protection of God Almighty,

will be able to rest safely under his care.

²I will declare to Yahweh,

"You protect me;

you are like a fort in which I am safe.

You are my God, the one in whom I trust."

³He will rescue you from all hidden traps

and save you from deadly diseases.

⁴He will shield you as a bird protects her young under her wings.

You will be safe in his care.

His faithfully doing what he has promised is like a shield that will protect you.

⁵You will not be afraid of things that happen during the night that could terrorize you
or of arrows that your enemies will shoot at you during the day.

⁶You will not be afraid of plagues that demons cause when they attack people at night
or of other evil forces that kill people at midday.

⁷Even if a thousand people fall dead alongside you,
even if ten thousand people are dying around you,
you will not be harmed.

⁸Look and see
that wicked people are being punished!

⁹Yahweh protects me;
trust God Almighty to shelter you, too.

¹⁰If you do, nothing evil will happen to you;
no plague will come near your house

¹¹because Yahweh will command his angels
to protect you in whatever you are doing.

¹²They will hold you up with their hands
so that you will not hurt your foot on a big stone.

¹³You will be kept safe from being harmed by your enemies;
it will be as though you were killing strong lions and poisonous snakes by stepping on them!

¹⁴Yahweh says, "I will rescue those who love me;
I will protect them because they acknowledge that I am Yahweh.

¹⁵When they call out to me, I will answer them.
I will help them when they are experiencing trouble;
I will rescue them and honor them.

¹⁶I will reward them by enabling them to live a long time,
and I will save them."

Psalm 92

A psalm that is to be sung on Sabbath days.

¹Yahweh, it is good for people to thank you
and to sing praise to you who are greater than any other god.

²It is good to proclaim every morning that you faithfully love us
and to sing songs each night that declare that you always do what you have promised to do,
³accompanied by musicians playing harps that have ten strings
and by the sounds made by a lyre.
⁴Yahweh, you have caused me to be glad;
I sing joyfully because of what you have done.
⁵Yahweh, the things that you do are great!
But it is difficult to understand all that you think.
⁶There are things that you do that foolish people cannot know about,
things that stupid people cannot understand.
⁷They do not understand that although the number of wicked people increases as blades of grass do
and that those who do what is evil prosper,
they will be completely destroyed.
⁸But Yahweh, you will be king forever.
⁹Yahweh, your enemies will certainly die,
and those who do wicked things will be defeated.
¹⁰But you have caused me to be as strong as a wild ox;
you have caused me to be very joyful.
¹¹I have seen you defeat my enemies,
and I have heard those evil men wail while they were being slaughtered.
¹²But righteous people will prosper like palm trees that grow well,
like the cedar trees that grow in Lebanon.
¹³They are like the trees that people plant at the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem,
the trees that are close to the courtyard of the temple of our God.
¹⁴Even when righteous people become old, they do many things that please God.
They remain strong and full of energy like trees that remain full of sap.
¹⁵That shows that Yahweh is just;
he is like a huge rock on which I am safe,
and he never does anything that is wicked.

Psalm 93

¹Yahweh, you have become the King!

The majesty and the power that you have are like robes that a king wears.

You put the world firmly in place, and it will never be moved out of its place.

²You started to rule as king a very long time ago;

you have always existed.

³Yahweh, when you created the world, you separated the water from the chaotic mass and formed oceans,
and the waves of the waters of those oceans still roar,

⁴but you are greater than the roar of those oceans,

more powerful than the ocean waves!

You are Yahweh, the one who is greater than any other god!

⁵Yahweh, your laws never change,

and your temple has always been holy.

That will be true forever.

Psalm 94

¹Yahweh, you are able to get revenge on your enemies.

So show them that you are going to punish them!

²You are the one who judges all people on the earth;

so arise and give them what they deserve.

³Yahweh, how long will those wicked people be glad?

It is not right that they continue being glad!

⁴They do evil things, and they boast about doing them;

how long will they be allowed to continue doing that?

⁵Yahweh, it is as though those wicked people were crushing us, your people;

they oppress the nation that you have made and that belongs to you alone.

⁶They murder widows and orphans

and people from other countries who think it is safe to live in our land.

⁷Those wicked people say, "Yahweh does not see anything;

the God whom those Israelites worship does not see the evil things that we do."

⁸You evil people who rule Israel, you are foolish and stupid;

when will you become wise?

⁹God made our ears;

do you think that he cannot hear what you say?

He created our eyes;

do you think that he cannot see the evil things that you do?

¹⁰He corrects the leaders of other nations;

do you think that he will not punish you?

He is the one who knows everything;

why do you think that he does not know what you do?

¹¹Yahweh knows everything that people are thinking;

he knows that what they think is evil and useless.

¹²Yahweh, how fortunate are those who allow you to discipline them,

those who want you to teach them your laws.

¹³When those people have had troubles, you cause those troubles to cease,

and someday it will be as though you will dig pits for the wicked people,

and that they will fall into those pits and die.

¹⁴Yahweh will not abandon his people;

he will not desert those who belong to him.

¹⁵Someday judges will decide matters fairly for people,

and all honest people will be pleased about that.

¹⁶But when wicked people oppressed me,

no one defended me!

No one stood up to testify for me against those evil people.

¹⁷If Yahweh had not helped me at that time,

I would have been executed;

my life would have gone to the place where dead people say nothing.

¹⁸I said, "I am falling into disaster,"

but, Yahweh, you held me up by faithfully loving me.

¹⁹Whenever I am very worried,

you comfort me and cause me to be happy.

²⁰You have nothing to do with wicked judges,

those who establish laws that allow people to do what is not right.

²¹They plan to get rid of righteous people,
and they declare that innocent people must be executed.

²²But Yahweh has become like my fortress;
my God is like a huge rock on which I am protected.

²³He will punish those wicked leaders in return for the things that they have done;
he will get rid of them because of the sins that they have committed;
yes, Yahweh our God will wipe them out.

Psalm 95

¹Come, sing to Yahweh;
sing joyfully to the one who protects us and saves us!

²We should thank him as we come before him
and sing joyful songs as we praise him.

³Because Yahweh is a great God,
he is a great king who rules over all other gods.

⁴He rules over the whole earth
from the deepest places to the highest mountains.

⁵The seas are his because he made them.
He is the one who made the dry land.

⁶We should come, worship, and bow down before him.
We should kneel before Yahweh, the one who made us.

⁷He is our God,
and we are the people whom he protects,
like sheep that a shepherd takes care of.
I desire that today you may hear what Yahweh is saying to you.

⁸He says, "Do not become stubborn as your ancestors did at Meribah,
and as they did at Massah in the wilderness.

⁹There your ancestors wanted to see if they could do evil things without my punishing them.
Even though they had seen me perform many miracles, they tested whether I would continue to be patient with them.

¹⁰For forty years I was angry with those people,

and I said, 'Those people are unreliable.

They refuse to obey my commands.'

¹¹So because I was very angry; I solemnly said about them,

'They will never enter the land of Canaan where I would have allowed them to rest!'"

Psalm 96

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song!

You people throughout the earth, sing to Yahweh!

²Sing to Yahweh and praise him!

Every day proclaim to others that he has saved us.

³Tell about his glory to all people groups;

tell all people groups the marvelous things that he has done.

⁴Yahweh is great, and he deserves to be praised very much;

he should be revered more than all the gods.

⁵All the gods the other people groups worship are only idols,

but Yahweh is truly great; he created the skies!

⁶God shows his splendor and majesty; they shine out from where he rules.

Strength and beauty are in his holy house.

⁷You people in nations all over the earth, praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh for his glorious power!

⁸Praise Yahweh as he deserves to be praised;

bring an offering and come to his temple.

⁹Bow down before Yahweh because his holiness shines out from him with wonderful beauty.

Everyone on earth should be very afraid in his presence, because he is good and powerful, completely different than us.

¹⁰Say to all the people groups, "Yahweh is the king!

He put the world in its place, and nothing will ever be able to move it.

He will judge all the people groups fairly."

¹¹All the beings that are in the heavens should be glad, and all the people on the earth should rejoice.

The oceans and all the creatures that are in the oceans should roar to praise Yahweh.

¹²The fields and everything that grows in them should rejoice.

When they do that, it will be as though all the trees in the forests are singing joyfully
¹³in front of Yahweh.

That will happen when he comes to judge everyone on the earth.

He will judge all the people fairly according to what he knows is true.

Psalm 97

¹Yahweh is the king!

I want everyone on the earth to be glad

and the people who live on the islands in the oceans to also rejoice about that!

²There are very dark clouds around him;

he rules completely, justly, and fairly.

³He sends fire in front of him,

and he completely burns all his enemies in that fire.

⁴All around the world he sends lightning to flash;

people on the earth see it, and it causes them to be afraid and to tremble.

⁵The mountains melt like wax in front of Yahweh,

in front of the one who is the Lord, who rules over all the earth.

⁶The angels in heaven proclaim that he acts righteously,

and all the people groups see his glory.

⁷Everyone who worships idols should be ashamed;

all those who are proud of their false gods should realize that their gods are useless.

All those gods will bow down to worship Yahweh.

⁸The people of Jerusalem heard that God is just, and they rejoiced;

people in the other cities in Judah also rejoiced

because Yahweh judges and punishes wicked people.

⁹Yahweh is the supreme King over all the earth;

he has very great power, and none of the other gods has any power.

¹⁰Yahweh loves those who hate what people do that is evil;

he protects the lives of his people,

and he rescues them when the wicked people try to harm them.

¹¹He makes the righteous people truly live;

he causes those who are righteous in their inner beings to rejoice.

¹²You righteous people, rejoice about what Yahweh has done,
and thank him, our holy God!

Psalm 98

A psalm.

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song
because he has done wonderful things!
By his power he has defeated his enemies.
²Yahweh has declared to people that he has defeated his enemies;
he has revealed that he has punished his enemies,
and people in all the world have seen that he has done it.

³As he promised to us Israelite people,
he has faithfully loved us and been loyal to us.
People who live in very remote places in all the earth
have seen that our God has defeated his enemies.

⁴All you people everywhere should sing joyfully to Yahweh;
praise him while you sing and shout joyfully!

⁵Praise Yahweh while you play the lyres,
playing delightful music.

⁶Some of you should blow trumpets and other horns
while others shout joyfully to Yahweh, our king.

⁷The oceans and all the creatures that are in the oceans should roar to praise Yahweh.
Everyone on the earth should sing!

⁸It should seem as though the rivers were clapping their hands to praise Yahweh
and that the hills were singing together joyfully in front of Yahweh

⁹because he will come to judge everyone on the earth!
He will judge all the people groups in the world justly and fairly.

Psalm 99

¹Yahweh is the supreme king,

so all the people groups should tremble in his presence!
He sits on his throne in the temple above the statues of winged creatures,
so the earth should quake!

²Yahweh is a mighty king in Jerusalem;
he is also the supreme ruler of all the people groups.

³They should praise him because he is very great;
he is holy!

⁴He is a mighty king who loves what is just;
he has acted justly and fairly in Israel.

⁵Praise Yahweh, our God!
Worship him in front of his footstool, the sacred chest in his temple,
where he rules people.
He is holy!

⁶Moses and Aaron were two of his priests;
Samuel also was someone who prayed to him.
Those three cried out to Yahweh to help them,
and he answered them.

⁷He spoke to Moses and Aaron from the cloud that was like a huge pillar;
they obeyed all the laws and commandments that he gave to them.

⁸Yahweh, our God, you answered your people
when they cried out to you to help them;
you are a God who forgave them for the sins that they had committed,
even though you punished them for the things that they did that were wrong.

⁹Praise Yahweh, our God,
and worship him at the temple on his sacred hill;
it is right to do that because Yahweh, our God, is holy!

Psalm 100

A psalm of thanksgiving

¹Everyone in the world should shout joyfully to Yahweh!

²We should worship Yahweh gladly!

We should come before him singing joyful songs.

³We should acknowledge that Yahweh is God;
it is he who made us, and so we belong to him.

We are the people that he takes care of;
we are like sheep that their shepherd cares for.

⁴Enter the gates of his temple thanking him;
enter the courtyard of the temple singing songs to praise him!

Thank him and praise him

⁵because Yahweh always does good things for us.
He faithfully loves us as he promised us,
and he is faithful.

Psalm 101

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, I will sing to you!
I will sing about your faithful and just loyalty to us.

²I promise that while I rule people,
I will behave in such a way that no one will be able to criticize me.

Yahweh, when will you come to help me?

I will do things that are right.

³I will not allow anyone who does what is evil to come to me.

I hate the deeds of those who turn away from you;

I will completely avoid those people.

⁴I will not be dishonest,
and I will not have anything to do with evil.

⁵I will get rid of anyone who secretly slanders someone else,
and I will not let anyone near me who is proud and arrogant.

⁶I will approve of people in this land who are loyal to God,
and I will allow them to live with me.

I will allow to serve me those who behave in such a way that no one can criticize them.

⁷I will not allow anyone who deceives others to work in my palace,

and no one who tells lies will be allowed to continually come to work for me.

⁸Every day I will try to get rid of all the wicked people in this land;
I will expel them from this city, which is Yahweh's city.

Psalm 102

A prayer written by someone who was afflicted, when he was discouraged and pleaded for Yahweh to help.

¹Yahweh, listen to what I am praying;
hear me while I cry out to you!

²Do not turn away!
Listen to me,
and answer me quickly now when I am calling out to you!

³My life is ending like smoke that disappears;
I have a big fever which burns my body as a fire burns.

⁴I feel as though I am drying up like grass that has been mown,
and I do not even think about eating any food.

⁵I groan loudly,
and my bones can be seen under my skin because I have become very thin.

⁶I am like a lonely and despised vulture in the desert,
like an owl by itself in the abandoned ruins of a building.

⁷I lie awake at night;
because there is no one to comfort me,
I am like a lonely bird sitting on a housetop.

⁸All during each day my enemies insult me;
those who make fun of me mention my name
and say, "May you be like him" when they curse people.

⁹⁻¹⁰Because you are very angry with me,
I sit in ashes while I am suffering greatly;
those ashes fall on the bread that I eat,
and what I drink has my tears mixed with it.

It is as though you have picked me up and thrown me away!

¹¹My time to remain alive is short

like an evening shadow that will soon be gone.

I am withering as grass withers in the hot sun.

¹²But Yahweh, you are our king who rules forever;

people who are not yet born will remember you.

¹³You will arise and act mercifully toward the people of Jerusalem;

it is now time for you to do that;

this is the time for you to be kind to them.

¹⁴Even though the city has been destroyed,

we who serve you still love the stones that were formerly in the city walls;

because now there is rubble everywhere,

we, your people, are very sad when we see it.

¹⁵Yahweh, someday the people of other nations will have an awesome respect for you;

all the kings on the earth will see that you are very glorious.

¹⁶You will rebuild Jerusalem,

and you will appear there with your glory.

¹⁷You will listen to the prayers of your people who are homeless,

and you will not ignore them

when they plead with you to help them.

¹⁸Yahweh, I want to write these words

so that people in future years will know what you have done,

in order that people who are not born yet will praise you.

¹⁹They will know that you looked down from your own place in heaven

and saw what was happening on the earth.

²⁰They will know that you hear prisoners groaning

and that you will set free those who have been told, "You will be executed."

²¹As a result, people in Jerusalem will praise you for what you have done.

²²Many people from other people groups and those who are citizens of other kingdoms will gather to worship you.

²³But now you have caused me to become weak while I am still young;

I think that I will not remain alive very long.

²⁴I say to you, "My God, do not take me away from the earth now

before I become old!

You, on the other hand, live forever!

²⁵You created the world long ago,
and you made the heavens with your own hands.

²⁶The earth and the heavens will disappear, but you will remain.

They will wear out as clothes wear out.

You will get rid of them as people get rid of old clothes,
and they will no longer exist.

²⁷But you are not like the things that you created
because you are always the same;
you never die.

²⁸Someday our children will live safely in Jerusalem,
and their descendants will be protected as they live in your presence."

Psalm 103

A psalm written by David.

¹I tell myself that I should praise Yahweh.
I will praise him because he is holy.

²I tell myself that I should praise Yahweh
and never forget all the kind things he has done for me.

³He forgives all my sins,
and he heals me from all my diseases;

⁴he keeps me from dying,
and he blesses me by faithfully loving me and acting mercifully to me as he promised to do.

⁵He gives me good things during my entire life.
He makes me feel young and strong like eagles.

⁶Yahweh judges justly all those who have been treated unfairly.

⁷Long ago he revealed to Moses what he planned to do;
he showed to the ancestors of us Israelites the mighty things that he was able to do.

⁸Yahweh acts mercifully and kindly;
he does not quickly get angry when we sin;
he is always showing us that he faithfully loves us.

⁹He will not keep rebuking us,
and he will not remain angry forever.

¹⁰He has not punished us for our sins as we deserved.

¹¹The skies are very high above the earth,
and Yahweh's faithful love for all those who revere him is just as great.

¹²He has taken away the guilt for our sins
and put it as far from us as the east is from the west.

¹³Just as parents act mercifully toward their children,
Yahweh is kind to those who revere him.

¹⁴He knows what our bodies are like;
he remembers that he created us from dust
and that we therefore quickly fail to do what pleases him.

¹⁵We humans do not live forever;
we are like grass which withers and dies.
We are like wild flowers that bloom for a short while;

¹⁶but then the hot wind blows over them, and they disappear;
no one sees them again.

¹⁷But Yahweh will faithfully keep loving forever
all those who revere him, as he promised.
He will act fairly to our children and to their children;

¹⁸he will act that way to all those who obey the covenant he made with them to bless them if they did what he told them to do,
to all those who obey what he has commanded.

¹⁹Yahweh has taken his seat in the heavens where he rules as king;
from there he rules over everything.

²⁰You angels who belong to Yahweh, praise him!
You are powerful creatures who do what he tells you to do;
you obey what he commands.

²¹Praise Yahweh, you armies of angels who serve him and do what he desires.

²²All you things that Yahweh has created, praise him;
praise him in every place where he rules, everywhere!

I also will praise Yahweh!

Psalm 104

¹I tell myself that I should praise Yahweh.

Yahweh, my God, you are very great!

As a king has on his royal robes,
you have honor and majesty all around you!

²You created light and you hide behind it.
You spread out the whole sky as someone sets up a tent.

³You built your palace on the clouds.
You made the clouds to be like chariots to carry you.

⁴You caused the winds to be like your messengers,
and flames of fire to be like your servants.

⁵You placed the world firmly on its foundation
so that it can never be moved.

⁶Later, you covered the earth with a flood, like a blanket;
and the water covered the mountains.

⁷But when you rebuked the water, the oceans receded;
your voice spoke like thunder,
and then the waters rushed away.

⁸Mountains rose up from the water,
and the valleys sank down
to the levels that you had determined for them.

⁹Then you set a boundary for the oceans, a boundary that they cannot cross;
their water will never again cover the whole earth.

¹⁰You make springs to pour water into ravines;
their water flows down between the mountains.

¹¹Those streams provide water for all the animals to drink;
the wild donkeys drink the water and are no longer thirsty.

¹²Birds make their nests alongside the streams,
and they sing among the branches of the trees.

¹³From the heavens you send rain down on the mountains,
and you fill the earth with many good things that you create.

¹⁴You make grass to grow for the cattle to eat,
and you make plants to grow for people.

In that way, animals and people get their food from what grows in the soil.

¹⁵We get grapes to make wine to drink and to make us cheerful;
we get olives to make our face shine,
and we get grain to make bread to give us strength.

¹⁶Yahweh, you send plenty of rain to water your trees,
the cedar trees that you planted in Lebanon.

¹⁷Birds make their nests in those trees,
and storks make their nests in pine trees.

¹⁸High up in the mountains the wild goats live,
and hyraxes live in the rocks.

¹⁹Yahweh, you made the moon to indicate the times for our festivals,
and you made the sun that knows when to go down.

²⁰You bring darkness, and it becomes night
when all the animals in the forest prowl around looking for food.

²¹At night the young lions roar as they seek their prey,
but they depend on you to give them food.

²²At dawn, they go back to their dens and lie down.

²³During the daytime, people go to their work;
they work until it is evening.

²⁴Yahweh, you have made so many different kinds of things!
You were very wise as you made them all.

The earth is full of the creatures that you made.

²⁵We see the ocean which is very vast!
It is full of many kinds of living creatures,
big ones and little ones.

²⁶We see the ships which sail along!

We see the huge sea monster which you made to splash around in the sea.

²⁷All of these creatures depend on you
to give them the food that they need.

²⁸When you give them the food that they need,
they gather it.

You give them what you have in your hand,
and they eat it and are satisfied.

²⁹But if you refuse to give food to them,
they become terrified.

When you cause them to stop breathing, they die;
their bodies decay and become soil again.

³⁰When you cause newborn creatures to begin to breathe,
they start to live;

You give new life to all the living creatures on the earth.

³¹May the glory of Yahweh last forever.

May he rejoice about all the things that he has created.

³²He makes the earth shake just by looking at it!

By merely touching the mountains he makes them pour out fire and smoke!

³³I will sing to Yahweh as long as I live.

I will praise my God until the day that I die.

³⁴May Yahweh be pleased by all these things that I have thought about him
because I rejoice about knowing him.

³⁵However, may sinners disappear from the earth;
may there be no more wicked people!

But as for me, I will praise Yahweh!

Praise him!

Psalm 105

¹Give thanks to Yahweh; worship him and pray to him.

Tell everyone in the world what he has done!

²Sing to him; praise him as you sing to him;

tell others about his wonderful miracles.

³Be proud of Yahweh, who alone is God.

You people who worship Yahweh, rejoice!

⁴Ask Yahweh to help you and give you his strength,
and always seek to be with him!

⁵⁻⁶You people who are descendants of God's servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, the people whom God has chosen,
think about all the wonderful things that he has done;
he performed miracles, and he punished all our enemies.

⁷He is Yahweh, our God.
He rules and judges people throughout the earth.

⁸He never forgets the covenant that he made;
he made a promise that will last for a thousand generations.

⁹That is the covenant that he made with Abraham,
and he repeated that covenant with Isaac.

¹⁰Later he confirmed it again to Jacob
as a covenant for the Israelite people that would last forever.

¹¹What he said was, "I will give you the region of Canaan;
it will belong to you and your descendants forever."

¹²He said that to them when there were only a few of them,
a tiny group of people who were living in that land like strangers.

¹³They continued to wander from one place to another,
from one kingdom to another.

¹⁴But he did not allow others to oppress them.
He warned those kings by saying to them,

¹⁵"Do not do harm to the people whom I have chosen!
Do not harm my prophets!"

¹⁶He sent a famine to Canaan, and as a result all the people had no food to eat.

¹⁷So his people went to Egypt, but first he sent someone there.
He sent Joseph, who had been sold to be a slave.

¹⁸Later, while Joseph was in prison in Egypt,
they put his legs in shackles that hurt his feet,

and they put an iron collar around his neck.

¹⁹Joseph was in prison until the time
the events he predicted came to pass.

This was how Yahweh tested Joseph.

²⁰The king of Egypt sent servants, who set him free;
this ruler released Joseph from prison.

²¹Then he appointed him to take care of everything in the king's household,
to take care of everything that the king possessed.

²²Joseph was permitted to command the king's important servants
to do anything that Joseph wanted them to do,
and even to tell the king's advisors the things that they should do for the people of Egypt.

²³Later, Joseph's father Jacob arrived in Egypt.
He lived like a foreigner in the land that belonged to the descendants of Ham.

²⁴Years later Yahweh caused the descendants of Jacob to become very numerous.
As a result, their enemies, the Egyptians, considered that the Israelites were too strong.

²⁵So Yahweh caused the rulers of Egypt to turn against the Israelite people,
and they began to oppress his people.

²⁶But then Yahweh sent his servant Moses
along with Moses' older brother Aaron, whom Yahweh had also chosen to be his servant.

²⁷Those two performed amazing miracles among the people of Egypt
in that land where the descendants of Ham lived.

²⁸Yahweh sent darkness so that the people of Egypt could not see anything,
but the rulers of Egypt refused to obey when Moses and Aaron commanded them to let the Israelite people leave Egypt.

²⁹Yahweh caused all the water in Egypt to become blood,
and his doing that caused all the fish to die.

³⁰Then he caused the land to become full of frogs;
the king and his officials even had frogs in their bedrooms.

³¹Then Yahweh commanded that flies come, and swarms of them descended on the people of Egypt,
and gnats also swarmed across the whole country.

³²Yahweh sent rain, rain that became hail that fell upon them,

and he sent wild fires that burned throughout their land.

³³The hail ruined their grapevines and fig trees
and shattered all the other trees.

³⁴He commanded locusts to come, and hordes of them came;
so many came that they could not be counted.

³⁵The locusts ate every green plant in the land,
ruining all the crops.

³⁶Then Yahweh killed the oldest son in every house of the people of Egypt.

³⁷Then he brought the Israelite people out from Egypt;
they were carrying heavy loads of jewelry made of silver and gold that the people of Egypt had given to them.
No one was left behind because of being sick.

³⁸The people of Egypt were glad when the Israelite people left
because they had become very afraid of the Israelites.

³⁹Then Yahweh spread a cloud to cover the Israelites;
and at night it became a big fire in the sky to give them light.

⁴⁰Later the Israelites asked for meat to eat,
and Yahweh sent flocks of quail to them,
and he gave them plenty of manna, food from the sky, each morning.

⁴¹One day he caused a rock to open up, and water poured out for them to drink;
it was like a river flowing in that desert.

⁴²He did that because he kept thinking about the sacred promise that he had given to his servant, Abraham.

⁴³So his people were joyful as he brought them out from Egypt;
these people whom he had chosen were shouting joyfully as they went.

⁴⁴He gave to them the land that belonged to the people groups that lived there in Canaan,
and the Israelites took all their wealth.

⁴⁵Yahweh did all these things
so that his people would do all the things that he had commanded them to do.
Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 106

¹Praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh because everything he does is good;
he faithfully loves us forever as he promised us!

²Because Yahweh has done many great things,
no one can tell all the great things that Yahweh has done,
and no one can praise him enough.

³How fortunate are those who act fairly,
those who always do what is right.

⁴Yahweh, be kind to me when you help your people;
help me when you rescue them.

⁵Allow me to see your people become prosperous again
and to see all the people of your nation, Israel, become happy again;
allow me to be happy with them!

I want to praise you along with all those others who belong to you.

⁶We and our ancestors have sinned;
we have done what is wicked and evil.

⁷When our ancestors were in Egypt,
they did not pay attention to the wonderful things that Yahweh did;
they forgot about the many times that he showed that he faithfully loved them.
Instead, when they were at the Sea of Reeds,
they rebelled against God, who is greater than any other god.

⁸But he rescued them for the sake of his own reputation
so that he could show that he is very powerful.

⁹He rebuked the Sea of Reeds and it became dry,
and then while he led our ancestors,
they walked through it as though it were as dry as a desert.

¹⁰In that way he rescued them from the power of their enemies.

¹¹Then their enemies were drowned in the water of the Sea of Reeds;
not one of them was left.

¹²When that happened, our ancestors believed that Yahweh had truly done for them what he had promised to do,
and they sang to praise him.

¹³But they soon forgot what he had done for them;

they did things without waiting to find out what Yahweh wanted them to do.

¹⁴They intensely wanted food like they formerly ate in Egypt.

They did evil things to find out whether God would punish them or not.

¹⁵So he gave them what they requested,

but he sent a horrible disease upon them.

¹⁶Later when some of the men became jealous of Moses

and his older brother Aaron, who was dedicated to serve Yahweh by being a priest,

¹⁷the ground opened up and swallowed Dathan

and also buried Abiram and his family.

¹⁸God sent down from heaven a fire

which burned up all the wicked people who supported them.

¹⁹Then the Israelite leaders made a gold statue of a calf at Mount Sinai

and worshiped it.

²⁰Instead of worshipping our glorious God,

they started to worship a statue of an ox that eats grass!

²¹They forgot about God, who had rescued them by the great miracles that he performed in Egypt.

²²They forgot about the wonderful things that he did for them in Egypt

and the amazing things that he did for them at the Sea of Reeds.

²³Because of that, God said that he would get rid of the Israelites;

but Moses, whom God had chosen to serve him, stood up to persuade God not to do that.

As a result, God did not destroy them.

²⁴Later, our ancestors refused to enter the beautiful land of Canaan

because they did not believe that God would do as he promised and would enable them to take the land from the people who were living there.

²⁵They stayed in their tents and grumbled

and would not pay attention to what Yahweh said that they should do.

²⁶So he solemnly told them

that he would cause them to die there in the wilderness,

²⁷that he would scatter their descendants among the people of other nations and groups who did not believe in him,

and that he would allow them to die in those lands.

²⁸Later the Israelite people started to worship the idol of Baal at Mount Peor,

and they ate meat that had been sacrificed to Baal and those other lifeless gods.

²⁹Yahweh became very angry because of what they had done,
so again he sent a terrible disease to attack them.

³⁰But Phinehas stood up and punished the ones who had sinned greatly,
and as a result the plague ended.

³¹People have remembered that righteous deed that Phinehas did,
and in future years people will remember it.

³²Then at the springs of Meribah our ancestors caused Yahweh to become angry again,
and as a result Moses had trouble.

³³They caused Moses to become very angry,
and he said things that were foolish.

³⁴Our ancestors did not destroy the other people groups
as he told them to do.

³⁵Instead, the men took women from those people groups,
and they started to do the evil things that those people did.

³⁶Our ancestors worshiped the idols of those people,
which resulted in their being destroyed.

³⁷Some of the Israelites sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons that those idols represented.

³⁸They killed children who had done nothing wrong,
and offered them as sacrifices to the idols in Canaan.

As a result, the land of Canaan was polluted by those murders.

³⁹So by their deeds they made it impossible for God to accept them;
because they did not faithfully worship only God,
they became like women who sleep with other men instead of sleeping only with their husbands.

⁴⁰So Yahweh became very angry with his people;
he was completely disgusted with them.

⁴¹As a result, he allowed people groups who did not believe in him to conquer them,
so those who hated our ancestors started to rule over them.

⁴²Their enemies oppressed them
and completely controlled them.

⁴³Many times Yahweh rescued his people,

but they continued to rebel against him,
and they were finally destroyed because of the sins that they committed.

⁴⁴However, Yahweh always heard them when they cried out to him,
and he listened to them when they were distressed.

⁴⁵For their sake, he thought about the covenant that he had made to bless them;
because he never stopped loving them very much,
he changed his mind about punishing them more.

⁴⁶He caused all those who had taken the Israelites to Babylonia to feel sorry for them.

⁴⁷Yahweh our God, rescue us
and bring us back to Israel from among those people groups
so that we may thank you
and joyfully praise you.

⁴⁸Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship,
praise him now and forever!
All the people should agree!
Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 107

Book Five

¹Give thanks to Yahweh because he always does good things for us!

His faithful love for us lasts forever, as he has promised us!

²Those whom Yahweh has saved should tell others
that he has rescued them from their enemies.

³He has gathered those of you who were exiled to many lands;
he has gathered you together from the east and the west,
from the north and from the south.

⁴Some of those who returned from those countries wandered in the desert;
they were lost and had no homes to live in.

⁵They were hungry and thirsty,
and they even collapsed in exhaustion.

⁶When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,

and he rescued them from being distressed.

⁷He led them along a straight road where they walked safely
to cities in Canaan where they could live.

⁸They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

⁹He gives thirsty people plenty of water to drink,
and he gives hungry people plenty of good things to eat.

¹⁰Some of them were in very dark prisons;
they were prisoners, suffering because of chains fastened to their hands and feet.

¹¹They were in prison because they had rebelled against the message of God;
they were there because they had despised the advice given by God,
who is greater than all other gods.

¹²That is why God made them suffer hardships so that they would no longer be proud;
when they got into trouble, there was no one who would help them.

¹³When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from being distressed.

¹⁴He broke the chains that were on their hands and feet
and brought them out of those very dark prisons.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶He broke down the prison gates that were made of bronze;
he cut through the prison bars that were made of iron.
They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

¹⁷Some of them foolishly rebelled against God,
so they suffered for their sins.

¹⁸They did not want to eat any food,
and they almost died.

¹⁹When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from being distressed.

²⁰When he commanded that they be healed, they were healed;
he saved them from dying.

²¹They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully

and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

²²They should give offerings to him to show that they are thankful,
and they should sing joyfully about the miracles that he has performed.

²³Some of them sailed in ships;
they were selling things in cities far away.

²⁴As they were sailing, they also saw the miracles that Yahweh performed,
the wonderful things that he did when they were on very deep seas.

²⁵He gave orders to the winds, and they became strong
and stirred up high waves.

²⁶The ships in which they were sailing were tossed high in the air,
and then they sank into the troughs between the high waves;
then the sailors were terrified at the danger.

²⁷They stumbled about and staggered like drunken men,
and they did not know what to do.

²⁸When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,
and he rescued them from being distressed.

²⁹He calmed the storm
and he stilled the waves.

³⁰They were very glad when it became calm;
and Yahweh brought them safely into a harbor as they wished.

³¹They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully
and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

³²They should praise him among the Israelite people when they have gathered together,
and they should praise him in front of the leaders of the country.

³³Sometimes Yahweh causes rivers to become dry,
with the result that the land becomes a wilderness,
and springs of water become dry land.

³⁴Sometimes he causes land that has produced lots of crops to become salty wastelands,
with the result that they do not produce crops.
He does that because the people who live there are very wicked.

³⁵But sometimes he causes pools of water to appear in deserts,

and he causes springs to flow in very dry ground.

³⁶He brings hungry people into that land, to live there and to build cities there.

³⁷They plant seeds in their fields,

and they plant grapevines that produce large crops of grapes.

³⁸He blesses the people, and the women give birth to many children,

and they have large herds of cattle.

³⁹When the number of people became smaller and they were humiliated by their enemies
by being oppressed and caused to suffer,

⁴⁰Yahweh shows contempt for the leaders who oppress them,
and makes them to wander in a wilderness where there are no roads.

⁴¹But he rescues poor people from being in misery
and causes their families to increase in number like flocks of sheep.

⁴²People who live rightly see God do these things, and they rejoice;
wicked people hear about these things, too,
but they have nothing to say against Yahweh in reply.

⁴³Those who are wise should think carefully about these things;
they should consider all the things that Yahweh has done to show that he faithfully loves them.

Psalm 108

A psalm written by David

¹God, I am very confident in you.

I will sing to praise you.

It is an honor to wake up and praise you.

²I will arise before the sun rises,
and I will praise you while I play my harp and my lyre.

³I prayed, "Yahweh, I will thank you among all the people groups;
I will sing to praise you among the nations

⁴because your faithful love for us reaches up to the heavens,
and you are as faithful in keeping your promises as the clouds are high above the earth.

⁵Yahweh, show in the heavens that you are very great!
Show your glory to people all over the earth!

⁶Answer our prayers and, by your power help us to defeat our enemies
so that we, the people whom you love, may be saved.”

⁷Yahweh answered our prayers and spoke from his temple, saying, “Because I have conquered your enemies, I will joyfully divide the city of Shechem,
and I will distribute among my people the land in the Valley of Succoth.

⁸The region of Gilead is mine;
the people of the tribe of Manasseh are mine;
and the tribe of Judah is like my scepter.

⁹The region of Moab is like my washbasin;
I throw my sandal over the region of Edom to show that it belongs to me;
I shout triumphantly because I have defeated the people of the region of Philistia.”

¹⁰Because we want to attack the people of Edom,
who will lead my army to their capital city that has strong walls around it?

¹¹God, we do not want you to abandon us;
we want you to go with us when our army marches out to fight our enemies.

¹²We need you to help us when we fight against our enemies
because the help that humans can give us is worthless.

¹³But with you helping us, we shall win;
you will enable us to defeat our enemies.

Psalm 109

A psalm written by David for the choir director.

¹God, you are the one whom I praise,
so please answer my prayer

²because wicked people slander me
and tell lies about me.

³They are constantly saying that they hate me,
and they harm me for no reason.

⁴I show them that I love them
and that I pray for them,
but instead of being kind to me, they say that I have done evil things.

⁵In return for my doing good things for them and loving them,
they do evil things to me and hate me.

⁶So appoint a wicked judge who will judge my enemy,
and bring in one of his enemies who will stand up and accuse him.

⁷When the trial ends,
cause the judge to declare that he is guilty
and cause even his plea for mercy to be considered a sin.

⁸Then cause him to die soon;
bring someone else to take over his work.

⁹Cause his children not to have a father anymore,
and cause his wife to become a widow.

¹⁰Cause his children to leave the ruined homes that they have been living in
and to wander around begging for food.

¹¹Cause all the people to whom he owed money to seize his property;
cause strangers to take away everything that he worked to acquire.

¹²Make sure that no one acts with any loyalty toward his memory for the sake of your covenant;
make sure that no one pities his children.

¹³Cause all his children to die,
so that no one will live to carry on his name.

¹⁴Yahweh, remember and do not forgive his ancestors for the evil things that they did,
and do not even forgive the sins that his mother committed.

¹⁵Think about his sins continually,
but cause everyone living to completely forget who he was.

¹⁶I pray these things because that man, my enemy, never acted toward anyone as your covenant says we must;
he persecuted poor and needy people
and even killed helpless people.

¹⁷He liked to curse people.
So those terrible things that he requested to happen to others—cause them to happen to him!
He did not want to bless others,
so make sure that no one blesses him!

¹⁸He often cursed other people, also;

cause the terrible things that he wanted to happen to others to happen to him and enter his body as water does,
as olive oil soaks into a person's bones when it is rubbed on his skin.

¹⁹Cause those terrible things to cling to him like his clothes
and be around him like the belt that he wears every day.

²⁰Yahweh, I wish that you will punish all my enemies that way,
those who say evil things about me.

²¹But Yahweh, my God, do good things for me
in order that I may honor you;
rescue me from my enemies
because you faithfully love me as you promised.

²²I request you to do this because I am poor and needy
and my inner being is full of pain.

²³I think that my time to remain alive is as short
as an evening shadow that will soon disappear.
I will be blown away as a locust is blown by the wind.

²⁴My knees are weak because I have fasted very often,
and my body has become very thin.

²⁵The people who accuse me make fun of me;
when they see me, they insult me by shaking their heads at me.

²⁶Yahweh, my God, help me!
Because you faithfully love me, rescue me!

²⁷When you save me,
cause my enemies to know that you are the one who has done it!

²⁸They may curse me, but I ask that you bless me.
Cause those who persecute me to be defeated and disgraced,
but cause me to be glad!

²⁹Cause those who accuse me to be completely disgraced;
cause other people to see that they are disgraced as easily as they see the clothes that they wear!

³⁰But I will thank Yahweh very much;
I will praise him when I am among the crowd of people who are worshiping him.

³¹I will do that because he defends poor people like me

and because he saves us from those who have said that we must die.

Psalm 110

A psalm written by David.

¹Yahweh said to my lord the king,

“Sit here, close to me, in the place of highest honor

until I completely defeat your enemies

and make them like a stool for your feet!”

²Yahweh will extend your power as king

from Jerusalem to other lands;

you will rule over all your enemies.

³On the day that you lead your armies into battle,

many of your people will volunteer to join your army.

Your youthful strength will act for you like the dew that waters the earth early in the morning.”

⁴Yahweh has made a solemn promise

and he will never change his mind;

he has said to the king, “You will be a priest forever

like Melchizedek.”

⁵The Lord stands at your right side;

when he becomes angry, he will defeat many kings.

⁶He will judge and punish the people of many nations;

many bodies of the killed enemy soldiers will lie on the ground.

He will crush kings all over the earth.

⁷But the king will drink from the stream alongside the road;

he will be refreshed after defeating his enemies.

Psalm 111

¹Praise Yahweh!

I will thank Yahweh with my entire inner being

every time that those who do what is right come together.

²The things that Yahweh has done are wonderful!

All those who are delighted with those things
desire to study them.

³Because he is a great king and does wonderful things,
people greatly honor him and respect him;
the righteous things that he does will endure forever.

⁴He has done wonderful things that people will always remember;
Yahweh always acts kindly and mercifully.

⁵He provides food for those who have an awesome respect for him;
he never forgets the covenant that he made with our ancestors.

⁶By enabling his people to capture the lands that belonged to other people groups,
he has shown to us, his people, that he is very powerful.

⁷He does everything fairly, as he has promised us,
and we can depend on him to help us when he commands us to do things.

⁸What he commands must be obeyed forever;
and he acted in a true and righteous manner when he gave us those commands.

⁹He rescued us, his people, from being slaves in Egypt,
and he made a covenant with us that will last forever.
He is holy and awesome!

¹⁰Having an awesome respect for Yahweh is the way to become wise.
All those who obey his commands will know what is good for them to decide to do.
We should praise him forever!

Psalm 112

¹Praise Yahweh!
How fortunate are those who have an awesome respect for him,
those who happily obey his commands.

²Their children will prosper in their land;
God will bless their descendants.

³Their families will be wealthy,
and their righteous deeds will endure forever.

⁴For those who honor God, it is as if a light were shining on them in the darkness,

on those who are kind, merciful and righteous.

⁵Things will go well for those who generously lend money to others
and who conduct their businesses honestly.

⁶Righteous people will not be overwhelmed because of their troubles;
other people will always treasure their memories of them.

⁷They are not afraid when they receive bad news;
they confidently trust in Yahweh.

⁸They are confident and not afraid
because they know that they will see God defeat their enemies.

⁹They give things generously to poor people;
their kind deeds will endure forever,
and they will be exalted and honored.

¹⁰Wicked people see those things and are angry;
they gnash their teeth angrily,
but they will disappear and die.
The wicked things that they want to do will never happen.

Psalm 113

¹Praise Yahweh!

You people who serve Yahweh, praise him!
Praise him!

²Everyone should praise Yahweh now and forever!

³People who live in the east and people who live in the west,
everyone, should praise Yahweh!

⁴Yahweh rules over all the nations,
and high in the heavens he shows that his glory is very great.

⁵There is no one who is like Yahweh, our God,
who lives in the highest heaven

⁶and looks far down through the heavens and sees the people on the earth.

⁷He lifts poor people up so that they no longer sit in the dirt;
he lifts needy people up so that they no longer sit on heaps of ashes

⁸and causes them to be honored by sitting next to leaders,
leaders who rule his own people.

⁹He also enables women who have no children to live in their houses
as happy as mothers with children.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 114

¹When the Israelite people left Egypt,
when the descendants of Jacob left people who spoke a foreign language,

²the land of Judah became the place where people worshiped God;
and Israel became the land that he ruled over.

³When they came to the Sea of Reeds,
it was as though the water saw them and ran away!

When they came to the Jordan River,
the water in the river stopped flowing so that the Israelites could cross it.

⁴When they came to Mount Sinai and there was a big earthquake,
it was as though the mountains skipped like goats
and the hills jumped around like lambs.

⁵If someone asks, "What happened at the Sea of Reeds that caused the water to run away?
What happened that caused the water in the Jordan River to stop flowing?

⁶What happened that caused the mountains to skip like goats
and caused the hills to jump around like lambs?"

⁷Indeed, all the earth will tremble before the Lord!
Everyone will tremble in the presence of the God whom Jacob worshiped!

⁸He is the one who caused pools of water to flow from a rock for the Israelite people to drink,
and he is the one who caused a spring to flow from a solid rock cliff!

Psalm 115

A psalm written by David

¹Yahweh, people should praise you alone;
they must praise you, not us,

because you faithfully love us and always do what you have promised to do.

²It is not right that other people groups should say about us,

“They claim that their God is very powerful,
but if that is true, why does he not help them?”

³Our God is in heaven,
and he does whatever he wants!

⁴But their idols are only statues made of silver and gold,
things that humans have made.

⁵Their idols have mouths, but they cannot say anything;
they have eyes, but they cannot see anything.

⁶They have ears, but they cannot hear anything;
they have noses, but they cannot smell anything.

⁷They have hands, but they cannot feel anything;
they have feet, but they cannot walk,
and they cannot even make any sounds in their throats!

⁸The people who make those idols are as powerless as those idols,
and those who trust in those idols can accomplish nothing, just like their idols!

⁹You, my fellow Israelite people, trust in Yahweh!
He is the one who helps you and protects you like a shield.

¹⁰You priests, descendants of Aaron, trust in Yahweh!
He is the one who helps you and protects you like a shield.

¹¹All you who have a reverential respect for Yahweh, trust in him!
He is the one who helps you and protects you like a shield.

¹²Yahweh has not forgotten us;
he will bless us Israelite people!
He will bless the priests,

¹³and he will bless all those who have a reverential respect for him;
he will bless important people and people who are considered to be unimportant, everyone!

¹⁴I wish that Yahweh may give many children
to you, my fellow Israelite people, and to your descendants.

¹⁵I wish that Yahweh, the one who made heaven and the earth, may bless all of you!

¹⁶The highest heavens belong to Yahweh,
but he gave everything that is on the earth to us people.
¹⁷Dead people are not able to praise Yahweh;
when they descend into the place where dead people are,
they are unable to speak and cannot praise him.
¹⁸But we who are alive will thank him,
now and forever.
Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 116

¹I love Yahweh
because he hears me when I cry to him for help.
²He listens to me,
so I will call out to him all during my life.
³Everything around me caused me to think that I would die;
I was very afraid that I would die and go to the place where dead people are.
I was very distressed and afraid.
⁴But then I called out to Yahweh, saying,
"Yahweh, I plead with you to save me!"
⁵Yahweh is kind and does what is right;
he is our God, and he acts mercifully to us.
⁶He protects those who are helpless;
when I thought that I would die, he saved me.
⁷I must encourage myself
because Yahweh has done very good things for me.
⁸Yahweh has saved me from dying
and has kept me from troubles that would cause me to cry.
He has kept me from disaster.
⁹So here on the earth where people are still alive,
I live, knowing that Yahweh is directing me.
¹⁰I continued to believe in Yahweh,

even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted."

¹¹Even when I was distressed and said, "I cannot trust anyone,"

I continued to trust in Yahweh.

¹²So now I will tell you what I will offer to Yahweh

because of all the good things that he has done for me.

¹³I will offer to him a cup of wine

to thank him for saving me.

¹⁴When I am together with many people who belong to Yahweh,

I will give to him the offerings that I solemnly promised to give to him.

¹⁵Yahweh is very grieved when one of his people dies.

¹⁶I am one of those who serves Yahweh;

I serve him like my mother did.

He has ended my troubles.

¹⁷So I will offer to him a sacrifice to thank him,

and I will pray to him.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹When I am together with many of the people who belong to Yahweh

in the courtyard outside his temple in Jerusalem,

I will give to him the offerings that I solemnly promised to give to him.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 117

¹You people of all nations, praise Yahweh!

All you people groups, praise him

²because he faithfully loves us as he promised to do,

and he will forever do for us what he promised that he would do.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 118

¹Tell Yahweh that you thank him very much for the good things that he has done for you!

He faithfully loves us, his people, forever.

²You Israelite people should repeatedly shout,

"He faithfully loves us, his people, forever!"

³You priests who are descendants of Aaron should repeatedly shout,

"He faithfully loves us, his people, forever!"

⁴All you who revere him should repeatedly shout,

"He faithfully loves us, his people, forever!"

⁵When I was distressed, I called out to Yahweh,
and he answered me and set me free from my worries.

⁶Yahweh is on my side,
so I will not be afraid of anything.

No one can do anything that will prevent God from blessing me forever.

⁷Yes, Yahweh is on my side,
so I will look triumphantly at my enemies while he defeats them.

⁸It is better to trust in Yahweh
than to depend on people.

⁹It is better to trust Yahweh to protect us
than to trust that influential people will protect us.

¹⁰Armies of many nations surrounded us,
but Yahweh enabled us to defeat them by his power.

¹¹They completely surrounded us,
but we defeated them all by Yahweh's power.

¹²They swarmed around me like angry bees;
they were like a fire that flares up in a thornbush,
but we defeated them by Yahweh's power.

¹³Our enemies attacked us fiercely and almost defeated us,
but Yahweh helped us.

¹⁴Yahweh is the one who makes me strong,
and he is the one about whom I always sing;
he has saved us from my enemies.

¹⁵Listen to the joyful songs of victory being sung in the tents of the people who honor God!
They sing, "Yahweh has defeated our enemies by his mighty power;

¹⁶he has raised his strong right arm to show he is happy over defeating his enemies.

Yahweh has completely defeated them!"

¹⁷I will not be killed in battle;

I will live to proclaim the great things that Yahweh has done.

¹⁸Yahweh has punished me severely,

but he has not allowed me to die.

¹⁹You gatekeepers, open for me the gates of the temple

so that I may enter and thank Yahweh.

²⁰Those are the gates through which we enter the temple to worship Yahweh;

those who honor God enter through those gates.

²¹Yahweh, I thank you that you answered my prayer

and that you saved me from my enemies.

²²Yahweh's chosen king is like a stone that the builders rejected

when they were building a house,

but that stone became the cornerstone.

²³This was done by Yahweh,

and it is a wonderful thing for us to see.

²⁴This is the day on which we remember that Yahweh acted powerfully to defeat our enemies;

we will rejoice and be glad today.

²⁵Yahweh, we plead with you to keep rescuing us from our enemies.

Yahweh, please help us accomplish what we want to do.

²⁶Yahweh, bless the one who will come with your power.

From the temple we bless all of you.

²⁷Yahweh is God,

and he has caused his light to come to us.

Come, bring animal sacrifice and tie it to the horns of the altar.

²⁸Yahweh, you are the God whom I worship, and I will praise you!

You are my God, and I will tell everyone that you are great!

²⁹Thank Yahweh because he does good things for us!

He will faithfully love us forever as he has promised.

Psalm 119

¹How fortunate are those about whom no one can say truthfully that they have done things that are wrong,
those who always obey the laws of Yahweh.

²How fortunate are those who obey his weighty commands,
those who request him with their entire inner beings to help them to do that.

³They do not do things that are wrong;
they behave as Yahweh wants them to.

⁴Yahweh, you have given us your principles of behavior,
and you told us to obey them faithfully.

⁵I want so much to faithfully keep everything that you command.

⁶If I did that, I would not be ashamed
when I thought about your commands.

⁷When I learn all of your just regulations,
I will praise you with a pure inner being.

⁸I will obey all your statutes;
do not desert me!

⁹I know how a young person can live in a pure way;
it is by obeying your commands.

¹⁰I try to serve you with my entire inner being;
do not allow me to wander away from what you have commanded.

¹¹I have memorized your commands
so that I will not sin against you.

¹²Yahweh, I praise you;
teach me your statutes.

¹³I have announced to the people all the things that you have commanded us to do.

¹⁴I delight in obeying your requirements;
I enjoy that more than being very rich.

¹⁵I will study everything you have commanded,
and I will pay attention to how you have shown me to live.

¹⁶I will be happy to obey your statutes,
and I will not forget your words.

¹⁷Do good things for me, the one who serves you,

so that I may continue to live and obey your words during all my life.

¹⁸Help me to understand with my mind,
to know the wonderful things that are written in your laws.

¹⁹I am living here on the earth for only a short time;
do not keep me from understanding.

²⁰In my inner being I strongly desire to know your decrees all the time.

²¹You rebuke those who are proud;
you curse those who disobey your commands.

²²Do not allow them to continue to insult and scorn me;
I request this because I have obeyed your requirements.

²³Rulers gather together and plan ways to harm me,
but I will meditate on what you have commanded.

²⁴I am delighted with your requirements;
it is as though they were my advisors.

²⁵I think that I will soon die;
save my life as you have promised me that you would.

²⁶When I told you about all the things I did, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.

²⁷Help me to understand how you want me to behave,
and then I will meditate on your amazing instructions.

²⁸I am very sad, with the result that I have no strength;
enable me to be strong again as you promised me that you would do.

²⁹Prevent me from telling lies,
and be kind to me by teaching me your laws.

³⁰I have decided that I will faithfully obey you;
I am determined to follow your commands.

³¹Yahweh, I try to carefully cling to your requirements;
do not abandon me or let me be disgraced.

³²I will eagerly obey your commands
because you have helped me understand better and better what you want me to do.

³³Yahweh, teach me the meaning of your statutes,

and then I will completely obey them.

³⁴Help me to understand your laws

so that I may obey them with all my inner being.

³⁵I am happy with your commands,

so lead me along the paths that you have chosen for me.

³⁶Cause me to want to do what you command

and not to want to become rich.

³⁷Do not allow me to look at things that are worthless;

make me able to live as you want me to live.

³⁸Because I am one who serves you, do what you promised to do for me,

which is what you also promise to do for all those who honor you.

³⁹I become afraid when my enemies insult me;

stop them!

But you are right when you punish my enemies.

⁴⁰I very much desire to obey your principles of behavior;

because you are righteous, allow me to continue to live.

⁴¹Yahweh, show me that you faithfully love me,

and rescue me as you promised you would.

⁴²After you do that, I will be able to reply to those who insult me

because I trust in your word.

⁴³Never prevent me from speaking your truth

because I have confidence in your regulations.

⁴⁴I will always obey your laws

forever and ever.

⁴⁵I will always be safe

because I have tried to obey your principles of behavior.

⁴⁶I will tell to kings what you require,

and because they are unable to prove me wrong, they will not cause me to be ashamed.

⁴⁷I am delighted to obey your commands,

and I love them.

⁴⁸I respect your commandments,

and I love them;

I will meditate on everything you require us to do.

⁴⁹Do not forget what you said you would do for me, the one who serves you,
because what you have said has caused me to confidently expect good things from you.

⁵⁰When I have been suffering, you comforted me;
you did what you promised me, and that kept me alive.

⁵¹Proud people are always making fun of me,
but I do not turn away from obeying your laws.

⁵²Yahweh, when I think about your regulations that you gave to us long ago,
I am comforted.

⁵³When I see wicked people disregard your laws,
I become very angry.

⁵⁴While I have been living here on the earth for a short time,
I have written songs about your statutes.

⁵⁵Yahweh, during the night I think about you,
and so I obey your laws.

⁵⁶What I have always done is to obey your principles of behavior.

⁵⁷Yahweh, you are the one whom I have chosen,
and I promise to obey your words.

⁵⁸With all my inner being I plead with you to be good to me;
act kindly to me as you promised that you would do.

⁵⁹I have thought about my behavior,
and I have decided to return to obeying your requirements.

⁶⁰I hurry to obey your commands;
I do not delay at all.

⁶¹Wicked people have tried to seize me as a hunter tries to catch an animal with a net,
but I do not forget your laws.

⁶²In the middle of the night I awake,
and I praise you for your commands
because they are fair.

⁶³I am a friend of all those who have an awesome respect for you,

those who obey your principles of behavior.

⁶⁴Yahweh, you faithfully love people all over the earth;
teach me your statutes.

⁶⁵Yahweh, you have done good things for me
as you promised that you would do.

⁶⁶Teach me to think carefully before I decide what to do,
and teach me other things that I need to know
because I believe that it is right for us to obey your commands.

⁶⁷Before you afflicted me, I did things that were wrong,
but now I obey your words.

⁶⁸You are very good, and what you do is good;
teach me your statutes.

⁶⁹Proud people have told many lies about me,
but as for me, I obey your principles of behavior.

⁷⁰Those people are stubborn,
but as for me, I am delighted with your laws.

⁷¹It was good for me that you afflicted me
because the result was that I learned your statutes.

⁷²The laws that you give to us are worth more to me than gold,
more than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

⁷³You created me and formed my body;
help me to be wise so that I may learn your commands.

⁷⁴Those who have an awesome respect for you will see what you have done for me,
because they have confidence in the promises of your word.

⁷⁵Yahweh, I know that your regulations are right
and that you have made me suffer because you love me without end.

⁷⁶Comfort me by showing that you faithfully love me
as you said to me that you would do.

⁷⁷Act mercifully to me so that I may continue to live
because I am delighted with your laws.

⁷⁸Cause the proud people who falsely accuse me to be shamed;

but as for me, I will continue meditating on what you have commanded I should do.

⁷⁹Cause those who have an awesome respect for you to come back to me
so that they may learn what you command.

⁸⁰Enable me to perfectly obey your statutes
so that I may not be ashamed because of not doing that.

⁸¹I am waiting for you to save me from my enemies;
I confidently expect that you will tell me what you will do.

⁸²My eyes are tired from waiting a long time for you to do what you promised that you would do,
and I ask, "When will you help me?"

⁸³I have become as useless as a wineskin that is shriveled from hanging a long time in the smoke inside a house,
but I have not forgotten your statutes.

⁸⁴How long must I wait?
When will you punish those who persecute me?

⁸⁵It is as though proud people, those who do not obey your laws, have dug deep pits for me to fall into. ⁸⁶All your
commands are trustworthy;
but people are persecuting me by telling lies about me, so please help me.

⁸⁷Those people almost killed me,
but I have not stopped obeying your principles of behavior.

⁸⁸Because you faithfully love me, allow me to continue to live
so that I may continue to obey your requirements that you have spoken.

⁸⁹Yahweh, your word will last forever;
it is firmly fixed in heaven.

⁹⁰You will faithfully continue to act for people who are not yet born;
you have put the earth in its place, and it remains firmly there.

⁹¹To this day, all things on the earth remain because you decided that they should remain;
everything on the earth serves you.

⁹²If I had not been delighted in obeying your laws,
I would have died because of what I was suffering.

⁹³I will never forget your principles of behavior
because as a result of my obeying them, you have enabled me to continue to live.

⁹⁴I belong to you; save me from my enemies

because I have tried to obey your principles of behavior.

⁹⁵Wicked men are waiting to kill me,

but I will think about your requirements.

⁹⁶I have learned that there is a limit for everything,

but your commands have no limit.

⁹⁷I love your laws very much.

I meditate on them all during the day.

⁹⁸Because I know your commands

and because I think about them all the time,

I have become wiser than my enemies.

⁹⁹I understand more than my teachers do

because I meditate on what you command.

¹⁰⁰I understand more than many old people do

because I obey your principles of behavior.

¹⁰¹I have avoided all evil behavior

so that I may obey your words.

¹⁰²I have not refused to obey them

because you have taught me while I have studied them.

¹⁰³When I read your words,

they are like honey that I eat;

yes, they are even sweeter than honey.

¹⁰⁴Because I have learned your principles of behavior,

I am able to understand many things;

therefore I hate all evil things that some people do.

¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to guide me;

it is like a light that shows me where to walk.

¹⁰⁶I have solemnly promised, and I am solemnly promising it again,

that I will always obey your regulations;

they are all fair.

¹⁰⁷Yahweh, I am suffering very much;

cause me to be strong again as you have promised to do.

108Yahweh, when I thank you while I pray, it is like a sacrifice to you;
please accept it,
and teach me your regulations.

109My enemies are often trying to kill me,
but I do not forget your laws.

110Wicked people have tried to seize me as a hunter tries to catch little animals with a trap,
but I have not disobeyed your principles of behavior.

111I have your requirements forever;
because of them, I am joyful in my inner being.

112I have decided to always obey your commands, every one of them.

113I hate people who only say they love you,
but I love your laws.

114You are like a place where I can hide from my enemies,
and you are like a shield behind which I am protected from them;
I trust in your promises.

115You evil people, go away from me
so that I may obey my God's commands!

116Enable me to be strong as you promised that you would do,
so that I may continue to live.

I am confidently expecting that you will restore me;
do not disappoint me.

117Hold me up so that I may be safe
and always pay attention to your commands.

118You reject all those who disobey your statutes;
because they make deceitful plans and they do not keep their word.

119You get rid of all the wicked people on the earth as people get rid of trash;
therefore I love your requirements.

120I tremble because I am afraid of you;
I am afraid because you punish those who do not obey your regulations.

121But I have done what is right and fair;
so do not allow people to oppress me.

¹²²Be responsible for doing good things for me,
and do not allow proud people to oppress me.

¹²³My eyes are tired from waiting a long time for you to rescue me,
for you to save me as you promised that you would.

¹²⁴Do something for me to show that you faithfully love me,
and teach me your statutes.

¹²⁵I am one who serves you;
enable me to understand what you want me to know
so that I may learn your requirements.

¹²⁶Yahweh, now is the time for you to punish people
because they have disobeyed your laws.

¹²⁷Truly, I love your commands more than I love gold;
I love them more than I love very pure gold.

¹²⁸So I conduct my life by your principles of behavior,
and I hate all the evil things that some people do.

¹²⁹Your requirements are wonderful,
so I obey them with all my inner being.

¹³⁰When someone explains your words,
it is as though they are lighting a light;
what they say causes even people who have not learned your laws to be wise.

¹³¹I eagerly desire to know your commands
as a dog pants with its mouth open, wanting to be fed.

¹³²Listen to me and act kindly to me
as you do to all those who love you.

¹³³Guide me as you promised;
do not allow evil people to control what I do.

¹³⁴Rescue me from those who oppress me
so that I may obey your principles of behavior.

¹³⁵Act kindly toward me
and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶I cry very much

because many people do not obey your laws.

137Yahweh, you are righteous

and your regulations are just.

138You did what was right when you gave us the laws of your covenant promise,

and you can be trusted when you made those promises to us.

139I am furious

because my enemies disregard your words.

140I have found that your promises are dependable,

and I love them.

141I am not important, and people despise me,

but I do not forget your principles of behavior.

142You are righteous and you will be righteous forever,

and your laws will never be changed.

143I constantly have troubles and I am worried,

but your commands cause me to be happy.

144Your requirements are always fair;

help me to understand them so that I may continue to live.

145Yahweh, with all my inner being I call out to you;

answer me and I will obey your statutes.

146I call out to you,

"Save me, and I will keep your commandments."

147Each morning I arise before dawn and call to you to help me;

I confidently expect you to do what you have promised.

148All during the night I am awake,

and I meditate on your commands and your promises.

149Yahweh, because you faithfully love me,

listen to me while I pray;

keep me safe because I keep your regulations.

150Those evil people who oppress me are coming closer to me;

they do not pay any attention to your laws.

151But Yahweh, you are near to me,

and I know that your commands will never be changed.

152 Long ago I found out about your requirements,
and I know that you intended them to last forever.

153 Look at me, see that I am suffering very much, and heal me
because I do not forget your laws.

154 Defend me when others accuse me and rescue me from them;
allow me to continue to live as you promised that you would.

155 Wicked people do not obey your statutes,
so you will certainly not save them.

156 Yahweh, you have been merciful by helping me in many ways;
allow me to continue to live as you have done until now.

157 Many people are my enemies; many people cause me to suffer,
but I do not neglect your commands.

158 When I look at those who are not faithful to you, I am disgusted
because they do not obey your requirements.

159 Yahweh, notice that I love your principles of behavior;
because you faithfully love me, allow me to continue to live.

160 I can rely on everything that you have said;
all your regulations will endure forever.

161 Rulers persecute me for no reason,
but in my inner being I have a very awesome respect for your words.

162 I am happy about your words,
as happy as someone who has found a great treasure.

163 I thoroughly hate all lies
but I love your laws.

164 I praise you seven times a day
for your commandments because they are all just.

165 Things go well for those who love your laws;
nothing will make them abandon your laws.

166 Yahweh, I confidently expect that you will rescue me from my troubles,
and I obey your commands.

¹⁶⁷I obey what you require us to do;

I love it all very much.

¹⁶⁸I obey your principles of behavior,

and you see everything that I do.

¹⁶⁹Yahweh, listen while I pray for you to help me;

help me to understand your words.

¹⁷⁰Hear me while I pray,

and rescue me as you said you would.

¹⁷¹I will always praise you

because you teach me your rules.

¹⁷²I will sing about your words

because all your commands are just.

¹⁷³I request you to always be ready to help me

because I have chosen to obey your principles of behavior.

¹⁷⁴Yahweh, I eagerly desire for you to rescue me from my enemies;

I am delighted with your laws.

¹⁷⁵Allow me to continue to live in order that I can continue to praise you

so that your regulations will continue to help me.

¹⁷⁶I have sinned and turned away from you like a sheep that has left its flock;

search for me because I have not forgotten your commands.

Psalm 120

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship

¹When I was distressed, I called out to Yahweh

and he answered me.

²I prayed,

“Yahweh, rescue me from those who lie to me and try to deceive me!”

³You people who lie to me, I will tell you what God will do to you

and what he will do to punish you.

⁴He will punish you when soldiers shoot sharp arrows at you;

arrows that were hardened and made sharp

over hot coals from the wood of a broom tree.

⁵It is terrible for me, living among cruel people

like those who live in the regions of Meshech or Kedar.

⁶I have lived for a long time among people who hate to live with others peacefully.

⁷Every time I talk about living together peacefully,
they talk about starting a war.

Psalm 121

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship

¹When we travel toward Jerusalem,

I look up toward the hills and I ask myself, "Who will help me?"

²My answer is that Yahweh is the one who helps me;

he is the one who made heaven and the earth.

³He will not allow us to fall;

God, who protects us, will not fall asleep.

⁴The one who protects us Israelite people

never gets sleepy or sleeps.

⁵Yahweh watches over us;

he is like the shade that protects us from the sun.

⁶He will not allow the sun to harm us during the day,

and he will not allow the moon to harm us during the night.

⁷Yahweh will protect us from being harmed in any manner;

he will keep us safe.

⁸He will protect us from the time that we leave our houses in the morning until we return in the evening;

he will protect us now and he will protect us forever.

Psalm 122

A psalm written by David for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹I was glad when people said to me,

"We should go to the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem!"

²Now we are here,

standing inside the gates of Jerusalem.

³We can see that Jerusalem was a carefully built city.

Every part of the city was built to fit together

within the city as a whole.

⁴We people of the tribes of Israel

who belong to Yahweh can now go up there,

as Yahweh commanded that we should do,

so we can thank him.

⁵There are the thrones,

the thrones that the kings of Israel sat

when they ruled Israel.

These are the thrones of the descendants of King David.

⁶Pray that there will be peace in Jerusalem!

"I pray that those who love Jerusalem will succeed in life.

⁷I pray that there may be peace inside the walls of the city

and that people who are inside the palaces may be safe."

⁸For the sake of my relatives and friends,

"I pray that people will live peacefully inside Jerusalem."

⁹And because I love the temple of Yahweh our God,

"I pray that things will go well for the people who live in Jerusalem."

Psalm 123

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship

¹Yahweh, I look up toward you,

up to heaven, from where you rule.

²As servants ask their masters for what they need

and as maids ask their mistresses for what they need,

we ask you, Yahweh our God, for what we need,

until you act mercifully toward us.

³Yahweh, act very mercifully toward us

because our enemies have acted very contemptuously toward us.

⁴Arrogant people have made fun of us for a long time,
and proud people have oppressed us and have acted as though we were worthless.

Psalm 124

A psalm written by David for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹You Israelite people, answer this question:

What would have happened to us if Yahweh had not been helping us?

²When our enemies attacked us,
if Yahweh had not been fighting for us,

³we would have all been killed
because they were very angry with us!

⁴They would have been like a flood of water sweeping us away;
it would have been as though the water had covered us,

⁵and we would all have drowned in the flood.

⁶But we praise Yahweh
because he has not allowed our enemies to destroy us.

⁷We have escaped from our enemies as a bird escapes from the trap that hunters have set;
it is as though the trap that our enemies set for us was broken
and we have escaped from it!

⁸Yahweh is the one who helps us;
he is the one who made heaven and the earth.

Psalm 125

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹Those who trust in Yahweh are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken or moved out of its place.

²As the hills that surround Jerusalem protect it,
so Yahweh protects us, his people,
and he will protect us forever.

³Wicked people should not be allowed to rule over the land where righteous people live.
If they did that, those righteous people would think of doing wrong themselves.

⁴Yahweh, do good things to those who do good things to others
and to those who sincerely obey your commands.

⁵But when you punish the Israelites who no longer obey you,
you will punish them the same as you punish all the other evildoers.

I wish that things may go well for people in Israel!

Psalm 126

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹When Yahweh made Jerusalem prosperous again,
it was wonderful;

it seemed as though we were dreaming.

²We were extremely happy,
and we continued shouting joyfully.

Then the other people groups said about us,

“Yahweh has done great things for them!”

³We said, “Yes, Yahweh truly has done great things for us,
and we are very happy.”

⁴Restore us, O Yahweh, like the rains that fill the streams in the southern Judean wilderness.

Enable our nation to become great again like it was before.

⁵We cried when we planted seeds because it was hard work preparing the soil that had not been plowed for many years;

now we want to shout joyfully because we are gathering a big harvest.

⁶Those who cried as they carried the bags of seeds to the fields will shout joyfully
when they bring the crops to their houses at harvest time.

Psalm 127

A psalm written by Solomon for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹If people are building a house without Yahweh helping them,
they are building it in vain.

Similarly, if Yahweh does not protect a city,
it is useless for guards to stay awake at night.

²It is also useless to arise very early and go to sleep late at night

so that you can work hard all day to earn money to buy food
because Yahweh gives food to those whom he loves even while they sleep.

³Children are a gift that comes to parents from Yahweh;
they are a reward from him.

⁴If a man has sons while he is still young,
when they grow up, they will be able to help him defend his family
as a soldier can defend himself if he has a bow and arrows in his hand.

⁵How fortunate is a man who has many sons;
he is like a soldier who has many arrows in his quiver.

If a man with his many grown sons is taken by his enemies to the place where they decide matters, his enemies will
never be able to defeat that man
because his sons will help to defend him.

Psalm 128

A psalm written for those going up to the temple to worship.

¹How fortunate are you who have an awesome respect for him
and do what he wants you to do.

²You will be able to enjoy the food you provide yourself with;
you will be fortunate and prosperous.

³Your wife will be like a grapevine that bears many grapes;
she will give birth to many children.

Your children who sit around your table;
you will be like a strong olive tree that has many shoots growing up around it.

⁴Like that, Yahweh will bless every man who has an awesome respect for him.

⁵I wish that God in his temple on Mount Zion may help you greatly,
and that you will see the people of Jerusalem prospering every day that you live!

⁶I wish that you may live many years
and that you may have grandchildren and be able to see them.
I wish that things may go well for people in Israel!

Psalm 129

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹I say that my enemies have afflicted me ever since I was young.

Now I ask you, my fellow Israelites, to repeat those same words:

²"Our enemies have afflicted us since our nation began,
but they have not defeated us!

³Our enemies struck us with whips that cut into our backs
as a farmer uses a plow to cut deep furrows into the ground."

⁴But Yahweh is righteous,
and he has freed us from being slaves to wicked people.

⁵I wish that they may all be shamed because we will defeat them—all of Jerusalem's enemies.

⁶I hope that they may be of no value, like grass that grows on the roofs of houses,
that dries up and does not grow tall;

⁷no one wants to cut it and tie it up as bundles and carry it away.

⁸People who pass by and see men harvesting grain usually greet them by saying to them,
"We wish that Yahweh may bless you!"

But this will not happen to the enemies of Israel.

We, acting as Yahweh's representatives, bless you, our fellow Israelites!

Psalm 130

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹Yahweh, I have great troubles, so I call out to you.

²Yahweh, hear me
while I call out to you to have mercy on me!

³Yahweh, if you kept a record of the sins that we have committed,
not one of us would escape from being condemned and punished!

⁴But you forgive us,
with the result that we have an awesome respect for you.

⁵Yahweh has said that he would help me;
I trust what he said, and I wait eagerly for him to do that.

⁶I wait for Yahweh to help me
more than watchmen wait for the morning to come;
yes, I wait more eagerly than they do!

⁷You, my fellow Israelites, confidently expect that Yahweh will bless us.

He will bless us because he has mercy on us,
and he is very willing to save us.

⁸It is he who will save us Israelite people from being punished for all the sins that we have committed.

Psalm 131

A psalm written by David for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹Yahweh, I am not proud;

I do not deserve to achieve impressive things in life.

I do not worry about problems that are too difficult for me to solve.

²Instead, I am calm and peaceful in my inner being

like a small child who no longer nurses but is happy to be with its mother.

In the same way, I am peaceful within my inner being.

³You, my fellow Israelites, confidently expect that Yahweh will do good things for you
now and forever!

Psalm 132

A song to sing along the road up to Jerusalem.

¹Yahweh, do not forget King David

and all the hardships he endured!

²He made a solemn promise to you,

the mighty God whom our ancestor Jacob worshiped.

³He said, "I will not go home,

I will not rest on my bed,

⁴and I will not sleep at all

⁵until I build a place for Yahweh,

a home for the mighty God whom Jacob worshiped."

⁶In Ephrathah we heard where the sacred chest was.

So we went and found it near the city of Kiriath Jearim, and we took it to Jerusalem.

⁷Later we said, "Let us go to the sacred tent of Yahweh in Jerusalem;

let us worship there in front of the throne where he is sitting."

⁸Yahweh, come to the place where you live eternally,
to the place where your sacred chest is,
to the place that shows that you are very powerful.

⁹I want that the righteous behavior of your priests will always be evident,
and that your people will always shout joyfully.

¹⁰You chose David to serve you as king of Israel;
do not reject him!

¹¹Yahweh, you made a solemn promise to David,
a promise that you will not break.
You said, "I will cause your descendants to rule as kings like you.

¹²If they obey my covenant with them
and obey all the commands that I will give them,
the line of kings descended from you will never end."

¹³Yahweh has chosen Jerusalem;
that is where he wants to rule from.

¹⁴He said, "This is the city where I will live forever;
this is the place where I want to stay.

¹⁵I will give to the people of Jerusalem all that they need;
I will give enough food to satisfy even the poor people there.

¹⁶I will cause the priests to behave in a manner worthy of ones whom I have saved;
and all my people who live there will shout joyfully.

¹⁷There in Jerusalem I will cause one of David's descendants to become a great king;
he also will be my chosen king,
It is there that I will make David's line of descendants continue.

¹⁸I will defeat his enemies and cause them to be very ashamed;
but the crown that my king wears will always shine."

Psalm 133

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹It is very good and very pleasant
for God's people to gather together in peace.

²It is as delightful as the precious oil
that ran down from the high priest Aaron's head onto his beard when Moses anointed him,
that ran down onto the collar of his robes.

³Gathering together in peace is as delightful as the dew that falls on Mount Hermon
and the dew that falls on Mount Zion.

Yahweh has promised to bless his people there in Jerusalem
by making their nation last forever.

Psalm 134

A psalm written for people going up to the temple to worship.

¹All you people who serve Yahweh,
who stand up and serve him at night in his temple,
come and praise him!

²Lift up your hands to pray to him in the temple
and praise him!

³I hope that Yahweh, who created heaven and the earth,
may bless you from where he lives in the temple on Mount Zion!

Psalm 135

¹Praise Yahweh!
You who worship Yahweh,
praise him!

²You who stand at the temple of Yahweh our God in its courtyards, ready to serve him,
praise him!

³Praise Yahweh because he does good things for us;
sing to him because it is a joyful thing to do so.

⁴He has chosen us, the descendants of Jacob;
he has chosen us Israelites to belong to him.

⁵I say these things because I know that Yahweh is great;
he is greater than all the gods.

⁶Yahweh does whatever he desires to do

in heaven, on the earth,
and in the seas, down to the bottom of the seas.

⁷He is the one who causes clouds to appear from very distant places on the earth;
he makes lightning bolts to flash with the rain,
and he brings the winds from the places where he stores them.

⁸He is the one who killed all the firstborn males in Egypt,
the firstborn of people and of animals.

⁹There he performed many kinds of miracles
to punish the king and all his officials.

¹⁰He attacked many nations
and killed the powerful kings who ruled them:

¹¹Sihon, the king of the Amor people group,
Og, the king of Bashan,
and all the other kings in the land of Canaan.

¹²Yahweh gave us their land,
so that it would belong to us, his people Israel, forever.

¹³Yahweh, your name will endure forever,
and people who are not yet born will remember the great things that you have done.

¹⁴Yahweh declares that we, his people, are innocent,
and he acts mercifully toward us.

¹⁵But the idols that the other people groups worship are only statues made of silver and gold,
things that humans have made.

¹⁶Their idols have mouths, but they cannot say anything;
they have eyes, but they cannot see anything.

¹⁷They have ears, but they cannot hear anything,
and they are not even able to breathe.

¹⁸The people who make those idols are as powerless as those idols,
and those who trust in those idols can accomplish no more than their idols can!

¹⁹My fellow Israelites, praise Yahweh!
You priests who are descended from Aaron, praise Yahweh!

²⁰You men who are descended from Levi, you who assist the priests, praise Yahweh!

All you who have a reverential respect for Yahweh, praise him!

²¹Praise Yahweh in the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem

where he lives!

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 136

¹Thank Yahweh because he does good things for us;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²Thank God, the one who is greater than all other gods;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

³Thank the Lord who is greater than all other lords;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁴He is the only one who performs great miracles;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁵He is the one who, by being very wise, created the heavens;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁶He is the one who caused the ground to rise up above the deep waters;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁷He is the one who created great lights in the sky;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁸He created the sun to shine in the daytime;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁹He created the moon and stars to shine during the nighttime;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁰He is the one who killed the firstborn males in Egypt;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹¹He led the Israelite people out of Egypt;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹²With his strong hand he led them out;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹³He is the one who caused the Sea of Reeds to divide;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁴He enabled the Israelite people to walk through it on dry land;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁵But he caused the king of Egypt and his army to drown in it;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁶He is the one who led his people safely through the wilderness;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁷He killed powerful kings;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁸He killed kings who were famous;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

¹⁹He killed Sihon, the king of the Amor people group;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²⁰He killed Og, the king of the region of Bashan;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²¹He gave their lands to us, his people;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²²He gave those lands to us people of Israel, who serve him;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²³He is the one who did not forget about us when our enemies had defeated us;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²⁴He rescued us from our enemies;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²⁵He is the one who gives food to all living creatures;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²⁶So thank God, who lives in heaven

because he will love us forever as he has promised.!

Psalm 137

¹When we had been taken to Babylonia far from Jerusalem,

we sat down by the rivers there,

and we cried when we thought about the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

²On the willow trees alongside the rivers we hung our harps
because we did not want to play them anymore and because we were very sad.

³The soldiers who had captured us and taken us to Babylonia forced us to sing for them;
they told us to entertain them; they said,
“Sing for us one of the songs that you previously sang in Jerusalem!”

⁴But we thought to ourselves,
“We are sad because we have been punished by Yahweh and brought to this foreign land;
we cannot sing songs about Yahweh while we are here!”

⁵If I forget about Jerusalem, I hope that my right hand will wither
so that I will be unable to play my harp!

⁶I hope that I will not be able to sing again
if I forget about Jerusalem,
if I do not consider that Jerusalem causes me to be more joyful than anything else does.

⁷Yahweh, punish the people of the Edom people group
for what they did on the day that the army of Babylon captured Jerusalem.
Do not forget that they said,
“Tear down all the buildings! Destroy them completely! Leave only the foundations!”

⁸You people of Babylon, you will certainly be destroyed!
How fortunate are those who punish you for what you did to us;

⁹How fortunate are those who take your babies
and smash them to pieces on the rocks.

Psalm 138

A psalm written by David.

¹Yahweh, I thank you with all my inner being.
I sing to praise you, even though many people worship idols.

²When I look toward your sacred temple, I bow down
and thank you because you faithfully love us and do all that you have promised.
You have given cause for people everywhere to honor you and what you have said more than anything else.

³When I called out to you, you answered me;

you enabled me to be strong and brave.

⁴Yahweh, someday all the kings of this earth will praise you
because they will have heard what you have said.

⁵They will sing about what you have done;
they will sing and say that you are very great.

⁶Yahweh, you are supreme,
but you take care of people who are considered to be unimportant.
However, you do not show yourself to proud people as faithful.

⁷When I am in the middle of many troubles,
you save me.
With your hand you rescue me from my enemies who are angry at me.

⁸Yahweh, you will do for me everything that you promised;
you faithfully love us forever.
Finish what you started to do for us, your Israelite people!

Psalm 139

A psalm written by David for the choir director.

¹Yahweh, you have examined what is in my inner being,
and you know everything about me.

²You know when I sit down and when I stand up.
Even though you are far away from me,
you know what I am thinking.

³From the time that I rise in the morning until I lie down to sleep at night,
you know everything that I do.

⁴Yahweh, even before I say anything,
you know everything that I am going to say!

⁵You protect me on all sides;
you put your hand on me to protect me with your power.

⁶I am not able to understand that you know everything about me.
That is too hard for me to really understand.

⁷Where could I go to escape from your Spirit?

Where could I go to get away from you?

⁸If I go up to heaven, you will be there.

If I lie down in the place where the dead people are, you will be there.

⁹If the sun could carry me across the sky,

if I flew west and made a place to live on an island in the ocean,

¹⁰you would be there also to lead me by your hand,

and you would help me.

¹¹I could wish for the darkness to hide me,

or I could wish for the light around me to become darkness.

¹²But even if that happened, you would still see me.

For you the night is as bright as the daytime,

because daylight and darkness are no different to you.

¹³You created all the parts of my body;

you put the parts of my body together when I was still in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I praise you because you made my body very awesomely and wonderfully.

Everything that you do is amazing!

I certainly know that very well.

¹⁵When my body was being formed,

while it was being put together where no one else could see it,

you saw it!

¹⁶You saw me before I was born.

You wrote in your book the number of days that you had decided that I would live.

You did that before any of those days had even started!

¹⁷God, what you think about me is very valuable.

There are a huge amount of things that you think about.

¹⁸If I could count them, I would see that they are more than the grains of sand at the seashore.

When I awake, I am still with you.

¹⁹God, I wish that you would kill the wicked people!

I wish that violent men would all leave me.

²⁰They say wicked things about you;

they slander your name.

²¹Yahweh, I certainly hate those who hate you!

I despise those who rebel against you.

²²I hate them completely,

and I consider that they are my enemies.

²³God, search my inner being;

find out what I am thinking!

²⁴Find out whether there is anything evil in my inner being,

and lead me along the road that leads to my being with you forever.

Psalm 140

A psalm written by David.

¹Yahweh, rescue me from being attacked by evil men;

even more, keep me safe from being attacked by violent people.

²They are always planning to do evil things,

and they are always encouraging people to start quarrels.

³By what they say, they injure people as poisonous snakes do.

⁴Yahweh, protect me from the power of wicked people.

Keep me safe from violent men who plan to ruin me.

⁵It is as though proud people have set a trap for me;

it is as though they have spread their nets to catch me;

it is as though they have put these things along the road to catch me.

⁶I say to you, "Yahweh, you are my God.

Listen to me while I cry out to you to help me."

⁷Yahweh, my Lord, you are the one who strongly defends me;

you have protected me during battles as though you had put a helmet on my head.

⁸Yahweh, do not give to wicked people the things that they desire,

and do not allow them to do the evil things that they plan to do.

⁹Do not allow my enemies to become proud;

cause the evil things that they say they will do to me to happen to them instead.

¹⁰Cause burning coals to fall on their heads!

Cause them to be thrown into deep pits from which they cannot climb out!

¹¹Do not allow those who slander others to succeed;
cause evil things to happen to violent men and destroy them!

¹²Yahweh, I know that you will defend those who are oppressed,
and that you will do what is just.

¹³Righteous people will surely thank you,
and they will live in your presence.

Psalm 141

A psalm written by David.

¹Yahweh, I call out to you;
please help me quickly!
Listen to me when I am calling to you.

²Accept my prayer as though it were incense being burned as an offering to you.
Accept me while I lift up my hands to pray to you,
just as you accept sacrifices that are offered to you in the evening.

³Yahweh, do not allow me to say things that are wrong;
guard what I say as a sentry guards a door.

⁴Prevent me from wanting to do anything that is wrong
and from joining with wicked men when they want to do evil deeds.
Do not even allow me to share in eating delightful food with them!

⁵It is all right if righteous people strike me or rebuke me
because they are trying to act kindly toward me to teach me to do what is right;
if they do that, it will be as if someone honored me by anointing my head with olive oil;
but I am always praying that you will punish the wicked because of the wicked deeds that they do.

⁶When their rulers are thrown down from the top of rocky cliffs,
they will know that what I am saying here is good.

⁷They will know one day that their bodies will lie scattered on the ground in the place of the dead,
just as one scatters clods of earth when he plows a field.

⁸But Yahweh God, I continue to request that you help me.
I ask you to protect me;
do not allow me to die now!

⁹It is as though people have set traps for me;
protect me from falling into those traps.
It is as though they have spread nets to catch me;
keep me from being caught in those nets.
¹⁰I wish that wicked people may fall into the traps they have set to catch me
while I escape from them.

Psalm 142

A psalm that David prayed when he was hiding in a cave.

¹Yahweh, I cry out to you;
I plead for you to help me.
²I am bringing to you all my problems;
I am telling you all my troubles.
³When I am very discouraged,
you know what I should do.
Wherever I walk, it is as though my enemies have hidden traps for me to fall into.
⁴I look around,
but there is no one who sees me,
no one who will protect me,
and no one who cares about what happens to me.
⁵So Yahweh, I cry out to you to help me;
you are the one who protects me;
you are all that I need while I am alive.
⁶Listen to me while I cry out to you for help
because I am very distressed.
Rescue me
because those who make me suffer are very strong;
I cannot escape from them.
⁷Free me from my troubles
so that I may thank you.
If you do that, when I am with others who live rightly,

I will praise you for having been very good to me.

Psalm 143

A psalm written by David.

¹Yahweh, hear me while I pray to you!

Because you are righteous
and because you faithfully do what you have promised,
listen to what I am pleading for you to do for me.

²I am one who worships you;
do not judge me
because you do not consider anyone to be completely innocent.

³My enemies have pursued me;
they have completely defeated me.
It is as though they have put me in a dark prison
where I have nothing good to hope for.

⁴So I am very discouraged in my inner being;
I am very dismayed.

⁵I remember what has happened previously;
I meditate on all the things that you have done;
I consider all the great deeds that you have performed.

⁶I lift up my hands to you while I pray;
I want very much to be with you as much as I would thirst for water in a vast wilderness.

⁷Yahweh, I am very discouraged,
so please answer me right now!
Do not keep away from me
because if you do that, I will soon be among those who descend to where the dead people are.

⁸Every morning cause me to remember that you faithfully love me
because I trust in you.

I pray to you;
show me the things that I should do.

⁹Yahweh, I have gone to you for you to protect me,

so rescue me from my enemies.

¹⁰You are my God;

teach me to do what you want me to do.

I want your good Spirit to show me the right things to do.

¹¹Yahweh, restore me when I am close to dying as you promised to do
because you are righteous!

¹²I am one who serves you;

so because you faithfully love me as you promised to do,

kill my enemies

and get rid of all those who oppress me.

Psalm 144

Written by David

¹I praise Yahweh, who is like a huge rock on which I am safe!

He trains my hands so that I can use them to fight battles;

he trains my fingers so that I can shoot arrows in a war.

²He is the one who protects me as he promised;

he is like a fortress in which I am safe,

he protects me as shields protect soldiers,

and he gives me refuge.

He defeats other nations and then puts them under my power.

³Yahweh, we people are so insignificant! Why do you notice us?

It is amazing to me that you pay attention to humans.

⁴The time that we live is as short as a puff of wind;

our time to live disappears as a shadow does.

⁵Yahweh, tear open the sky and come down!

Touch the mountains so that smoke may pour out from them!

⁶Cause lightning to flash with the result that your enemies will run away!

Shoot your arrows at them and cause them to run away in panic.

⁷It is as though my enemies are like a flood around me;

reach your hand down from heaven

and rescue me from them.

They are men from foreign countries

⁸who always tell lies.

Even when they swear to tell the truth,
they tell lies.

⁹God, I will sing a new song to you,
and I will play my ten-stringed harp while I sing to you.

¹⁰You enable kings to defeat their enemies;
you rescue those who serve you as I did.

¹¹So I ask you to save me from being killed by the swords that those evil people carry.

Rescue me from the power of those men from foreign countries
who always tell lies.

Even when they swear to tell the truth,
they tell lies.

¹²I wish that our sons may all grow to full adulthood;
I wish that our daughters may grow up to be as straight and tall
as the pillars that stand in the corners of palaces.

¹³I wish that our barns may be full of many different crops.
I wish that the sheep in our fields may give birth to tens of thousands of baby lambs.

¹⁴I wish that our cattle may give birth to many calves
without having any miscarriages or deaths when they are born.
I wish that there may not be any time when the people in our streets cry out in distress
because foreign armies are invading.

¹⁵If good things like that happen to a nation,
the people will be very fortunate.
How fortunate are those who worship Yahweh as God!

Psalm 145

A psalm written by David to praise God.

¹My God and King, I will proclaim that you are very great;
I will praise you now and forever.

²Every day I will praise you;

Yes, I will praise you forever.

³Yahweh, you are great, and you ought to be praised very much;
we cannot fully realize how great you are.

⁴Parents will tell their children the things that you have done;
they will tell their children about your mighty deeds.

⁵I will think about how you are very glorious and majestic,
and I will meditate on all your wonderful deeds.

⁶People will speak about your powerful and awesome deeds,
and I will proclaim that you are very great.

⁷People will remember and proclaim that you are very good to us,
and they will sing joyfully that you always act justly.

⁸Yahweh, you act kindly and mercifully toward us;
you do not quickly become angry;
you faithfully love us very much as you have promised to do.

⁹Yahweh, you are good to everyone,
and you act mercifully to everything that you have made.

¹⁰Yahweh, all the creatures that you made will thank you,
and all your people will praise you.

¹¹They will tell others that you rule very gloriously as our king
and that you are very powerful.

¹²They will do that so that everyone will know about your powerful deeds
and that you rule over us gloriously.

¹³You will never stop being king;
you will rule throughout all generations.

¹⁴Yahweh, you help all those who are discouraged,
and you lift up all those who have lost hope.

¹⁵All of the creatures that you made expect that you will provide food for them,
and you give them food when they need it.

¹⁶You give food to all living creatures generously,
and you cause them to be satisfied.

¹⁷Everything that Yahweh does, he does justly;

all that he does, he does mercifully.

¹⁸Yahweh comes near to all those who call out to him,

to those who call to him sincerely.

¹⁹To all those who have an awesome respect for him he gives what they need.

He hears them when they cry out to him and saves them.

²⁰Yahweh protects all those who love him,

but he will get rid of all the wicked people.

²¹I will always praise Yahweh;

I wish that all people everywhere may praise him forever, for he does everything perfectly.

Psalm 146

¹Praise Yahweh.

With my whole inner being I will praise Yahweh.

²I will praise Yahweh as long as I am alive;

I will sing to praise my God all the rest of my life.

³You people, do not trust in your leaders;

do not trust humans because they cannot save.

⁴When they die, their corpses decay and become soil again.

After they die, they can no longer do the things that they planned to do.

⁵But how fortunate are those whom God helps, the God whom Jacob worshiped.

These are the people who confidently expect Yahweh, their God, to help them.

⁶He is the one who created the heavens and the earth,

the oceans and all the creatures that are in them.

He always does what he has promised to do.

⁷He decides matters fairly for those who are treated unfairly,

and he provides food for those who are hungry.

He frees those who are in prison.

⁸Yahweh enables those who are blind to see again.

He lifts up those who have fallen down.

He loves the righteous people.

⁹Yahweh takes care of those from other countries who live in our land,
and he helps widows and orphans.

But he stops wicked people from what they are doing.

¹⁰Yahweh will continue to be our king forever;
you people of Israel, your God will rule forever!
Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 147

¹Praise Yahweh!

It is good to sing praises to our God.

It is a delightful thing to do and the right thing to do.

²Jerusalem was destroyed, but Yahweh is enabling us to build Jerusalem again.
He is bringing back the people who were taken to other lands.

³He enables those who were very discouraged to be encouraged again;
it is as though they have wounds and he bandages them.

⁴He has determined how many stars there will be
and gives names to all of them.

⁵Yahweh is great and very powerful,
and no one can measure how much he understands.

⁶Yahweh lifts up those who have been oppressed,
and he throws the wicked down to the ground.

⁷Thank Yahweh while you are singing to him to praise him;
on the harps, play music to our God.

⁸He covers the sky with clouds,
and then he sends rain to the earth
and causes grass to grow on the hills.

⁹He gives to animals the food that they need;
he gives food to young crows when they cry out because they are hungry.

¹⁰He is not impressed with strong horses
or with men who can run fast.

¹¹Instead, what pleases him are those who have an awesome respect for him,

those who confidently expect him to continue to love them as he promised to do.

¹²You people of Jerusalem, praise Yahweh!

Praise your God!

¹³He guards your city by keeping its gates strong.

He blesses the people who live there.

¹⁴He causes your people to become wealthy.

He gives you plenty of very good wheat to eat.

¹⁵He commands things to happen throughout the earth;

his words quickly reach the place to which he sends them.

¹⁶He sends snow to cover the ground like a white wool blanket,

and he scatters frost on the ground as wind scatters ashes.

¹⁷He sends hail down like pebbles;

when that happens, it is very difficult to endure because the air becomes very cold.

¹⁸But he commands the wind to blow, and it blows.

Then the hail melts and the water flows into the streams.

¹⁹He sends his message to the descendants of Jacob;

he tells to his Israelite people the things that he has decreed and what he has decided.

²⁰He has not done that for any other nation;

the other nations do not know his laws.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 148

¹Praise Yahweh!

Praise him, you angels who are in the heavens;

praise him, you angels up in the sky!

²All you angels who belong to him, praise him!

All you who are in the armies of Yahweh, praise him!

³Sun and moon, you also must praise him!

You shining stars, you praise him!

⁴You highest heavens, praise him!

You waters that are high above the sky, praise him!

⁵I want all of these to praise Yahweh
because by commanding that they exist, he created them.

⁶He set them in place;
he commanded that they should be there forever.
They cannot disobey that command!

⁷Everything on the earth, praise Yahweh!
You huge creatures and everything else that is deep in the ocean,
⁸fire and hail, snow and frost,
and strong winds that obey what he commands,
I tell all of you to praise Yahweh!

⁹Hills and mountains,
fruit trees and cedar trees,
¹⁰all the wild animals and all tame animals,
reptiles and other things that creep on the ground,
and all the birds, I tell all of you to praise Yahweh!

¹¹You kings on this earth and all the people that you rule,
you princes and all other rulers,
¹²you young men and young women,
you old people and children, everyone, praise Yahweh!

¹³I want them all to praise Yahweh
because he is greater than anyone else.
His power controls everything on the earth and in the heavens.

¹⁴He caused us, his people, to be strong
so that we Israelite people who are very precious to him
should praise him,
So praise Yahweh!

Psalm 149

¹Praise Yahweh!
Sing a new song to Yahweh;
praise him whenever his faithful people gather together!

²You Israelite people, be glad because of what God, who created you, has done for you!
You people of Jerusalem, rejoice because of what God, your king, has done for you!

³Praise Yahweh by dancing, by beating tambourines,
and by playing harps to praise him!

⁴Yahweh is pleased with his people;
he honors humble people by helping them to defeat their enemies.

⁵Because they have won battles, God's people should rejoice
and sing joyfully all during the night!

⁶They should shout loudly to praise God;
but they should also hold sharp swords in their hands,

⁷ready to use them to defeat the soldiers of nations that do not worship God
and to punish the people of those nations.

⁸They will fasten their kings and other leaders with iron chains.

⁹They will judge and punish the people of those nations as God wrote should be done.
Everyone else will honor God's faithful people for doing that!
Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 150

¹Praise Yahweh!
Praise God in his temple!
Praise him who is in his fortress in heaven!

²Praise him for the mighty deeds that he has performed;
praise him because he is very great!

³Praise him by blowing trumpets loudly;
praise him by playing harps and small stringed instruments!

⁴Praise him by beating drums and by dancing.
Praise him by playing stringed instruments and by playing flutes!

⁵Praise him by clashing cymbals;
praise him by clashing very loud cymbals!

⁶I want all living creatures to praise Yahweh!
Praise Yahweh!

Proverbs

Chapter 1

¹These are the sayings that compare one example with another, to teach moral lessons and to make people wise, from Solomon the king of Israel, who was son of David.

²The purpose of these sayings is to teach the meaning of wisdom and give examples of moral instruction, so wise teaching can guide you.

³These sayings offer correction so you may live by wisdom, by the measures of what is right, what is just, and what is fair.

⁴They give wise teaching to those who have no experience and to instruct those who do not know how to live a moral life,

and to give the young the knowledge they need and to teach them the understanding they do not have—

⁵so the wise may listen to these sayings and increase in their learning, and those who already have insight will gain more ways to live according to the lessons of wisdom.

⁶They seek to understand the lessons of the proverbs and the meaning of the parables. These are the words of the wise and their difficult riddles.

⁷You must begin your search for knowledge by honoring Yahweh and respecting him, a fool who dishonors himself hates wisdom and fights against the one who corrects him.

⁸My son, listen when your father teaches you and do not disobey the rules your mother set down.

⁹Their teaching is a wreath upon your head, and beautiful necklaces around your neck, they are priceless gifts from your parents.

¹⁰My son, as sinners try to draw you into their sin with smooth talk and flattery, do not listen to what they say and do not follow them.

¹¹They may say, "Come with us! Join us!

We will hide in wait and we will take the life of one who passes by.

We will hide ourselves and we will rise up and attack a person who has done us no wrong—that will be our sport.

¹²Like the grave has power to take even a healthy person and drag them to the place of the dead, we will take their life from them.

We will make them like those who fall into the place where there is no hope of escape.

¹³We will find many valuable and expensive items,
and we will fill our houses with what we stole from them!

¹⁴So, come, be part of our team!

We will split into equal shares, and give to each member of our team, from all the things we stole.”

¹⁵My son, do not walk that road with them!

Do not put your foot down on the same path on which they walk!

¹⁶They run to the places where they do terrible things,

They hurry so they can commit murder.

¹⁷It is useless to put out a net to trap a bird

while the bird is watching you.

¹⁸These men make plans that turn around and kill them.

They set a trap and the trap catches them.

¹⁹These are the ways of all who gain their riches through theft and deceit;

the things they stole destroy the lives of the thieves who cling to them.

²⁰Wisdom is like a woman who cries out in the streets.

Wisdom calls out to people in the plazas.

²¹At the intersection of busy streets she cries out

and at the entrance of city gates.

²²She cries, “How long will you who have not been taught, will you love being enticed to do what will harm you?

How long will you who think you know more than the wise, have so much joy in the little you know?

How long will you fools refuse to learn?

²³If you pay attention to me when I correct you,

I will tell you all I am thinking.

I will help you understand what I am saying to you.

²⁴But when I called to you, you refused to listen.

I beckoned you and stretched out my hands to you,

but no one paid any attention.

²⁵You refused to listen to my advice

and you did not listen when I corrected you.

²⁶I will laugh at you, when you are experiencing troubles,

when you are terribly afraid,

I will have contempt for you and not compassion.

²⁷When troubles strike you like a powerful storm,
and disasters hit you like a violent wind,
when you experience distress and you go through difficulties,
I will have contempt for you.

²⁸When people call to me to help them,
but I will not answer them.
They will be desperate for my help, and search everywhere for me,
but they will not find me.

²⁹They reject what I say and they hate what I know,
and they made a choice not to show respect to Yahweh.

³⁰They would not obey what I told them to do,
and they did not pay attention when I tried to correct them.

³¹So they will experience the consequences of their actions
when they carry out their evil plans.

³²Those who have not been taught wisdom are foolish.

Fools choose to make no decision about anything, but be sure of this: Their failure to make a decision will destroy their lives.

³³But those who pay attention to me will live in peace and safety,
and they will rest and not be afraid of any disaster that may come."

Chapter 2

¹My son, listen to what I say,
and consider my commands to be as valuable as a treasure.

²Pay attention to wisdom
and try hard to understand what is wise.

³Call out to Yahweh to get insight,
plead with him to help you understand more of what he wants you to know.

⁴Search eagerly for wisdom, like you would search for silver—
like you would search for a treasure that someone has hidden.

⁵If you do that, you will understand how to give Yahweh the respect he deserves,

and you will succeed in knowing God.

⁶Yahweh is the one who gives us wisdom.

He is the one who tells us things that we need to know and understand.

⁷He stores up good advice so he can give it to them who honor him by the way they live their lives.

He protects those who do with their lives what they say with their lips.

⁸He guards justice and works to see it is done,

and he keeps safe those who are faithful to him.

⁹You will understand what Yahweh sees is right and what Yahweh determines is just to do,

and he will show you the best way to live.

¹⁰Wisdom will fill your life;

knowing what Yahweh wants you to know will cause you to be joyful.

¹¹You will learn to tell the difference between right and wrong

and that will keep you safe.

¹²You will not do what Yahweh forbids you to do,

and you will stay away from those who imagine horrible things and talk about them.

¹³They go the wrong way,

and they walk where there is no light.

¹⁴They are glad when they do what is wrong,

they twist good things into bad and enjoy doing what they know is wrong.

¹⁵They bend the truth and live by deception

and their lies hide what they have done.

¹⁶Wisdom will keep you safe from the adulterous woman,

and you will not pay attention when a strange woman invites you to be with her.

¹⁷Those women left the husbands they married when they were young,

they forgot the promise they made to God to love only the one they married.

¹⁸Those who enter her house are taken to their death,

because the way to her house takes them where dead people are buried.

¹⁹All who go to her to sleep with her have no way to get out of her house,

they will be so lost they will never find the way back to life.

²⁰You must live your life in the same way that good men are living.

You should do the same things as those who do what is right.

²¹Those who do what is right will receive the land as a gift from Yahweh,
and only those who do what they have promised will stay in the land for a long time.

²²Those who do bad things will have no claim to this land,
and people who take advantage of others and do not keep their word, they will never have even a small part of the land.

Chapter 3

¹My son, do not forget the lessons I have taught you.

Keep my commands inside of you, as important guidance for how you will live,

²because they will help you live a long life, measured in either days or years,
and they will bring you peace in addition to all the lessons they teach you.

³Treat others with tenderness and always speak the truth to them.

Let tenderness and truth guide you in every relationship,
as if they both were on a necklace you wear, a necklace that guides you in everything you say.

⁴Then you will experience God's delight in you,
and people will also approve of you.

⁵Put all your trust in Yahweh,
and do not take action because you made up your mind what you should do;

⁶but in every choice and decision, look to Yahweh,
and he will show you how you must live.

⁷Do not think you are wise enough to direct your life,
give Yahweh the reverence he deserves,
and when evil invites you in, turn aside from it.

⁸Giving Yahweh reverence will make your body healthy
and it will give your bones the food it needs.

⁹When you gain money, honor Yahweh by giving him the tithe;
give him the first portion of what you received, to remember it all came from him.

¹⁰If you honor Yahweh, your storerooms will be so full that they will overflow,
and your barrels will be bursting with all the wine you have made.

¹¹My son, do not hate it when Yahweh corrects you,
and when he rebukes you, do not resent it,

¹²for Yahweh only corrects those he loves,
just like parents correct their children whom they love.

¹³Those who get wisdom are fortunate;
with her they also get understanding.

¹⁴Wisdom gives you a better profit than owning silver,
and she will give you something that is much more valuable than gold.

¹⁵Being wise is more precious than jewels
and there is nothing you desire that is worth as much as wisdom.

¹⁶Wisdom can make you able to live a long life, if you do what she teaches;
she is also ready to make you wealthy and to persuade other people to honor you.

¹⁷Wisdom is known by how kind she is,
and she always directs you to the place where you will find peace.

¹⁸Wisdom is like a tree whose fruit gives life to those who hold on to it,
and Yahweh gives happiness to those who hold on to it.

¹⁹By his wisdom Yahweh laid out the earth from the very beginning,
and by his understanding he put everything in the heavens exactly where they should be.

²⁰The deepest part of the oceans broke open according to Yahweh's design,
and in the same way, he made the dew so it would fall from the clouds above.

²¹My son, hold on to good sense in the decisions you make,
and do not take your eye off of them.

²²They will bring life to you,
and a sign of Yahweh's blessings on your life
that people can see by your good judgment.

²³Your good decisions will take you where you are going in safety,
and they will keep you from taking a wrong step on the way.

²⁴When you lie down to sleep, you will not have any fear,
and your sleep will be refreshing.

²⁵Do not let a disaster fill you with terror,
and do not let the wicked fill you with fear when they come for you.

²⁶Yahweh takes your side to defend you,
he will not allow any trap to catch and hold you.

- ²⁷Give good gifts to those who deserve it,
when you can, help them.
- ²⁸Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later;
perhaps I will help you tomorrow,"
when you have the money with you and can help them now.
- ²⁹Do not make plans to harm anyone you know,
especially those who live close to you and trust you.
- ³⁰If a person has done nothing to you,
do not argue with him or say he has done something to you, when he has not.
- ³¹Do not envy a person who does violence to others,
and do not imitate anything he does.
- ³²A lying person is hated by Yahweh for what he does,
but Yahweh is a close friend to anyone who lives rightly.
- ³³Yahweh promises punishment to the families of those who do evil things.
but he makes happy the families of the good.
- ³⁴Yahweh makes fools of those who treat others with disrespect,
but he gives his kindness to people who are humble.
- ³⁵Those who are wise will be honored,
but foolish people will become well known for their dishonor.

Chapter 4

- ¹Listen, children, listen to what I am teaching you.
If you pay attention, you will learn about what it means to understand.
- ²The lessons I give to you are good teaching, given in order.
So do not refuse to learn the lessons I teach you.
- ³When I was my father's boy,
and the only child of my mother,
- ⁴my father told me, "Put my words deep within you,
obey my orders to you,
and you will have life.
- ⁵Hold on to what is wise and whatever helps you understand,

and do not forget the lessons I taught you and do not throw away the insights I spoke to you.

⁶Do not run away from the lessons which the wise teach you,
because if you become wise, wisdom will keep you safe.

Love wisdom and it will guard your life.

⁷The most important thing you can do is to study the principles of wisdom
and spend all you own so you can grow more and more in your understanding.

⁸Wisdom is to be loved more than anything that is valuable, and she will raise you to a high position—
and wisdom will honor you when you show how much you love it.

⁹When you have attained wisdom, it will be like a beautiful wreath of honor on your head;
she will give you a beautiful crown.”

¹⁰Hear, my son, listen and understand what I say to you—
do this, and you will live a long life.

¹¹I directed you in the way you should walk and to use the wisdom you were taught;

I led you by the hand down the roads, roads that are the right way for you to go. ¹²When you live, you do not have
anyone to blame; if you live wisely,

when you use all your effort, you will succeed.

¹³Remember the lessons that discipline taught you,
and do not let them go.

Guard them; for you live your life by them.

¹⁴Do not do what wicked people do, nor be with them;
do not be with people who do evil things.

¹⁵Stay far from those ways;
turn another way and go on another road.

¹⁶Evil people cannot rest until they have done something that Yahweh said they must not do.
They will not rest until they force someone to fall, someone who was doing well until they came along.

¹⁷They get their strength, and they are fed by doing what is wrong;
and they are intoxicated by hurting others; they get drunk on it.

¹⁸The path taken by those who do right grows brighter and brighter, like the rising of the sun at dawn,
and it shines brighter and brighter until it is as full as the light of day.

¹⁹The actions of the wicked are like the darkness—
they stumble because they cannot see what makes them fall.

²⁰My son, pay attention to what I am saying to you.

Pay attention to these lessons I am teaching you.

²¹Keep reading them over and over,
and keep them deep within you.

²²For my words bring a message of life to those who pay attention to them,
and their message brings health to the entire body.

²³Protect your heart with all your strength and guard what you love;
guard it, for it becomes a fountain overflowing with life.

²⁴Make it your aim to keep away from you any lying speech,
and put any deceptive talk far away.

²⁵Look straight ahead because you are focused on what is good and right,
and do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

²⁶Take care about where you will go, and take care to be sure that the way is safe;
then you will know what to expect along the way.

²⁷Do not leave the straight road by turning to the left or to the right,
and do not follow the way that leads to evil.

Chapter 5

¹My son, learn the lessons I teach you about wisdom.

I understand much about this, so listen very carefully to what I tell you.

²If you do that, you will learn the difference between what is important and what is not,
and you will not mix true knowledge with mistakes when you speak.

³The woman who desires to commit adultery speaks with words that are sweet,
and her kisses are smoother than oil,

⁴but in the end, she is so bitter you can taste it,
and she cuts you like a sharp sword.

⁵She walks down to the place of death;
if you follow her, she will lead you all the way to the grave.

⁶She does not want to take the path that will let her live for a long time.
She goes here and there, but where she is going she does not know.

⁷So now, my sons, pay attention to what I say,

and do not forget or disobey the instruction I am giving you.

⁸Stay far away from the immoral woman;

do not go near the door of her house.

⁹If you go to her you will lose the respect of others,

and you give your life to someone who will not have mercy on you.

¹⁰It may be that others will take all the wealth that you have earned,

and it goes into the houses of people you do not know.

¹¹And when you are about to die,

you will groan because your flesh and your body are wasting away.

¹²Then you will say, "I hated it when I was punished for doing wrong;

I despised people when they told me how to live.

¹³I did not obey my teachers

and I paid no attention to those who taught me.

¹⁴I was almost destroyed by bad things that happened to me;

and this was known to everyone who came together to worship Yahweh."

¹⁵Just as you drink water from your own cistern, be faithful to your own wife.

¹⁶You would not waste your own water by pouring it into the street,

or let your water run into the public places.

¹⁷Let both your water and your wife be for you alone to enjoy,

and not for others to share with you.

¹⁸May your fountain be blessed;

may you be happy with the woman you married when you were young.

¹⁹She is as graceful as a loving deer and as graceful as a young doe.

Let her breasts always satisfy your longings,

so you are forever enraptured with her love.

²⁰My son, why should you be caught up in the arms of an adulteress?

Why should you caress the breasts of another man's wife?

²¹Yahweh sees everything we do; nothing is hidden from him.

He sees every path we take; he knows everywhere we go.

²²An evil person's sinful desires take hold of him;

his sins are like a trap that catches him.

²³An evil man will die because he could not say, “No” to his desires;
he gets lost because his foolishness has no limits.

Chapter 6

¹My son, if you provide a guarantee for a neighbor who takes out a loan,
or if you give the promise that you will pay for a loan of a person you do not know,
²you laid a trap for yourself by making the promise,
and you have been caught by agreeing to a contract for someone you did not know.

³Do this, my son, and deliver yourself from this difficulty:
humbly go to your neighbor and beg him to cancel the agreement that you made.

⁴Do not sleep,
and do not rest until you go and talk with him.

⁵Save yourself,
like a deer that escapes from the hunter;
or like a bird that flies away from the hand of one who hunts for birds.

⁶You lazy person, learn something from watching the ants.
Become wise and watch what they do.

⁷The ant has no commander, officer, or ruler telling him what to do,
⁸but during the summer it works hard,
gathering and storing food to eat during the winter.

⁹But you lazy person, how long will you continue to sleep?
When will you rise and go to work?

¹⁰You sleep for a little time, and then you say, “A little more sleep, a little more resting in bed,
a little more folding of the hands to take a nap.”

¹¹Suddenly poverty will take over your life like a thief who steals everything from you.

¹²A worthless person — a person who does bad to others—he lives by the lies he speaks to others.

¹³They tell tales by winking their eyes and they give signals by moving their feet, and they make plans by pointing
with their fingers.

¹⁴The one who does bad things lays out plans within himself;
he stirs up constant conflict wherever he goes.

¹⁵His own disaster will overtake him in a second;

he will be crushed to the point that he cannot be healed.

¹⁶There are six, even seven, things that Yahweh hates.

¹⁷Yahweh hates the eyes of the proud, the tongue that tells lies,

the hands that shed the blood of the innocent, ¹⁸a heart that plots and makes plans to do evil things to others,

¹⁹the witness who breathes out lies when he gives testimony,

and the one who causes strife between members of the same family.

²⁰My son, obey the command of your father,

and do not walk away from what your mother taught you.

²¹Keep these lessons and tie them close inside as a part of yourself;

tie them around your neck, to remind you how important they are to you.

²²When you walk, those lessons will guide you.

When you sleep, they will watch over you and protect you.

When you wake up in the morning, they will teach you.

²³These commands are like a lamp for you, and what we teach you is like a light to guide you.

When people correct you, this is to continually teach you the right way to live.

²⁴These lessons keep you from the immoral woman,

they tell you about her enticing words and warn you to be on guard.

²⁵Do not throw your desires after such a woman, nor should you desire her beauty;

do not let her capture you by the way she looks at you.

²⁶Sleeping with a prostitute may cost you only the price of a loaf of bread,

but if you sleep with another man's wife, it may cost you your life.

²⁷Can you carry hot coals in your pockets and not be burned?

²⁸Can you walk on burning coals and not scorch your feet?

²⁹So is anyone who sleeps with another man's wife—he will suffer for doing that.

It is certain he will be severely punished.

³⁰We do not despise a thief if he steals some food because he is very hungry.

³¹But if he steals something and then is caught by others,

he will have to pay back seven times as much as he stole,

even if he must sell everything that is in his house to get enough money to repay what he stole.

³²But a man who commits adultery has no good judgment

because he is destroying his own self.

³³Wounds and shame will come to him;

he will never forget how others disgraced him for his deed.

³⁴Because that woman's husband will be jealous, he will become furious,

and when he gets revenge, he will not act mercifully toward that man.

³⁵And he will not accept any bribe to stop him.

Chapter 7

¹My son, obey the words I say to you;

remember all my orders.

²If you obey my commands, you will live.

Consider my commands to be the most precious thing you possess, and obey them.

³Write down my commands and tie them to your fingers to remind yourself of them;

let it be as if you had written them in your inner self.

⁴Think of wisdom as if it were a woman, one of your own sisters, whom you love;

think of understanding as if it were a person, one of your own family, to whom you are loyal.

⁵If you do this, you will be able to stay away from women whom you must not be with,

random women who say nice things to you so that you will sin with them.

⁶Standing in my house, I looked out of a window,

through the wooden shade,

⁷and I saw some young men who had not yet learned how to live wisely.

I especially saw a young man there who had no good judgment.

⁸He walked down the street near the house on the corner of the road,

and he walked toward the house of the adulteress.

⁹It was the time of day when night and darkness were coming near.

¹⁰That was where the woman who was seeking an affair met the young man, and she greeted him.

She was dressed as prostitutes dress, with seductive and enticing clothes, and she had secret plans.

¹¹She was loud and wayward, attracting attention.

She did not stay in her own home.

¹²She searched for a man as she walked along the streets one day; on another day she stood in the market place to find a man.

At any street corner she waited for someone who would commit sin with her.

¹³When she saw the young man, she firmly took hold of him, and then she kissed him.

Without any shame and with great boldness, she said,

¹⁴"Today I have meat in my house, because I made a sacrifice in the temple to promise friendship with Yahweh.

In this way I kept my vows to Yahweh,

¹⁵and now I have come out here to meet you.

I was looking for you, and now I have found you!

¹⁶I have put on my bed sheets—the finest colored linen fabrics from Egypt.

¹⁷I have sprinkled perfumes on my bed—

myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

¹⁸Come! Let us make love all night, until the morning comes.

Let us enjoy ourselves with many ways of making love, as much as we want.

¹⁹My husband is not at home;

he has gone away on a long journey.

²⁰He filled a bag with money and took it with him;

he will not come back until the middle of the month."

²¹So she she convinced the young man with her persuasive words;

because of her smooth and convincing talk, he gave in to what she wanted to do.

²²He suddenly decided to follow her inside.

He followed her like an ox going to the place where its owner will slaughter it,

or like a deer

²³caught in a trap, where the hunter kills it by shooting an arrow into its inner parts.

He was like a bird that flies into a trap

without knowing that it will die there.

²⁴My sons, listen to me,

and pay careful attention to what I say to you.

²⁵You must resist her from within you, from deep inside. Do not decide to do what you want and follow her.

You must decide that you will never follow her where she goes.

²⁶She has caused many men to be ruined;

truly, no one can count the men she destroyed—they are too many to count.

²⁷The road to her house is the road to the grave;

it goes down to the place where the dead are kept.

Chapter 8

¹Listen to Wisdom calling; her voice sounds like that of a woman who shouting in the public square.

Understanding raises her voice; she sounds like a woman who calls out to be heard.

²On the top of the hills and where the roads come together,
there Wisdom stands.

³Wisdom also stands at the gates at the entrance to the city, and she calls out with a loud voice. Wisdom says:

⁴"I am calling out to everyone;

I am shouting to all people!

⁵You people who have no training, you must be taught how to live;
you must learn so that you can understand completely.

⁶Listen to me, because I will explain to you some excellent things.

I can teach you about what is right—

⁷for I speak what is true;

I detest evil things so much, I hate to even speak about them.

⁸Everything that I say is right;

I do not say anything that changes the meaning of what is good or that leads people away from it.

⁹My words give good advice to the one who understands the meaning of what I say;
those who have learned to tell good from evil will easily know that my words are right.

¹⁰Choose what I teach you,

instead of trying to get much silver;

and choose the knowledge I will show you, for it is more valuable than gold.

¹¹For I, Wisdom, am more precious than jewels;

nothing is as valuable for you as I am.

¹²I, Wisdom, live with Common Sense; we are like two people living in the same house.

I know many things, and I act carefully.

¹³Everyone who honors Yahweh hates what is evil.

I am Wisdom, and I hate it when people are proud, when they think they are more important than others.

I hate it when people act in evil ways, and when they tell lies.

¹⁴I give good advice and I have the best wisdom;

I have true understanding about the nature of things, and I have great strength.

¹⁵When kings are wise, they rule well;
and when rulers are wise, they make laws that are just.

¹⁶By me princes rule, noblemen, and all who govern with justice.

¹⁷I am Wisdom, and I love all who love me;
those who work hard to find me will find me.

¹⁸These people will have lasting riches, and they will live right,
because I have riches and honor with me.

¹⁹What I can give people is more valuable than fine gold and the best silver.

²⁰I always do what is right and just.

²¹I give wealth to those who love me,
and I fill up their treasuries.

²²Yahweh created me, Wisdom; he made me when he began to create the world;
I was the first thing he created in the beginning.

²³He made me long ago—at the very first, at the beginning of the earth.

²⁴I was born before the oceans were created,
when there were no springs from which water flowed.

²⁵I was born before the hills and mountains were set in place.

²⁶I am Wisdom and I was born before Yahweh made the earth,
before he made the tiny particles of dust in the earth, I was there.

²⁷I was there when Yahweh put the heavens where they are,
on the day when he marked on the ocean's surface how far a person at sea can see in every direction.

²⁸I was there when Yahweh put the clouds above the earth,
and when he made the springs at the bottom of the sea to give water to the oceans.

²⁹I was there when he fixed a boundary for the seas,
so that the water in the seas would not go past those boundaries,
and when he marked out the limits of the dry land.

³⁰I was at Yahweh's side as his master craftsman;
I made him happy every day, and I always rejoiced when I was with him.

³¹I was delighted with the whole world he created;
I was happy with the people he brought into existence, too.

³²So, you who are my children, listen to me.

How fortunate are those who live as I live.

³³Listen to what I teach you and you will become wise.

Do not reject what I have taught you.

³⁴How fortunate are those who listen to me,
those who wait for me outside my house every day.

³⁵Those who find me will find life,
and Yahweh will be pleased with them.

³⁶But those who do not find me, they hurt themselves.
All those who hate me love death."

Chapter 9

¹Wisdom builds her own house, just like a woman who has built her home;
she made seven pillars to support the roof of her house.

²She prepared a meal and set her table;
she prepared the animals and cooked them to serve for the dinner,
and she made the wine ready for her guests.

³Like a woman who sends out her maids to give the invitations to her guests, Wisdom calls out from the highest place in the city for all to hear, and she says:

⁴"If you are still immature, come here,"
and she gives the invitation to those who have no good judgment.

⁵"Come and eat the food that I have prepared," she says,
"and drink the good wine that I have mixed.

⁶Leave your untrained ways behind you, and live,
and I will show you how to walk on the road that will give you understanding.

⁷If you rebuke someone who says insulting things about other people, he will insult you, too.
If you offer correction to an evil person, he will hurt you.

⁸A person who insults others will hate you if you tell him to stop.
But if you rebuke a wise person, he will become your friend.

⁹If you give instruction to a wise person, he will become even more wise.
And if you teach a person who does what is right, he will learn even more.

¹⁰The first step in getting wisdom is to give Yahweh the respect he deserves,
and knowing that Yahweh, the Holy One, is the one who gives understanding.

¹¹If you become wise, your days will be filled full,
and you will add years to your life.

¹²If you become wise, you will gain many benefits from it;
if you ridicule other people, you will suffer by yourself.”

¹³A foolish woman talks loudly;
she is untaught in the subjects of wisdom and she knows very little.

¹⁴She sits at the door of her house
or on the highest place in the town,

¹⁵and she calls out to the men who are passing by,
to those walking down the road, concerned only about where they are going.

¹⁶“Any of you who have no experience, come here,”
she says to those who have no good judgment.

¹⁷“If you sleep with me, it will as sweet as drinking water that you have stolen,
or eating delicious food all by yourself.”

¹⁸Any man who accepts her invitation does not know that the dead are in her home,
that those who accepted her invitation and went into her house are now in the world of the dead.

Chapter 10

¹These are the proverbs of Solomon:

A child who lives according to wisdom makes his father happy;
but if a child does foolish things, he causes his mother to be very sad.

²Riches that you got by being dishonest will not have any value;
but when you do what is right, you will be protected from death.

³Yahweh does not allow people who do right to starve,
but he will make it impossible for wicked people to get what they want.

⁴A lazy person who will not work becomes poor;
those who work hard become rich.

⁵He is wise who harvests the crops when they are ready to be gathered;
but it would be shameful for him to sleep while others are harvesting the crop.

- ⁶Those who do right will receive many good gifts from God;
but those who do wicked things cover their violence so they cannot be seen.
- ⁷When we remember those who do what is right, we get a blessing from Yahweh;
but we cannot remember the names of the wicked.
- ⁸Wise people follow good instructions,
but a fool who talks too much will fail.
- ⁹An honest person lives his life and has nothing to hide;
but one who is dishonest—his lies will be discovered.
- ¹⁰The one who winks his eye signals others to help him do something that is wrong,
and a fool will be ruined because he talks too much.
- ¹¹A person who does right is like a spring that gives life-saving water;
but the wicked person hides his brutality by his words.
- ¹²Hatred has the power to start many arguments;
but love covers anything that may hurt us.
- ¹³Those who have good sense say what is wise,
but people who do not have good judgment must be punished.
- ¹⁴Wise people continue to learn all that they can,
but when foolish people speak, they will soon experience destruction.
- ¹⁵The wealth that rich people have protects them like a city is protected by a strong wall around it,
but because people are poor, they have no one to help them.
- ¹⁶If you do what is right, your reward will lead you to life,
but all that sinful people gain is the ability to sin even more.
- ¹⁷Life can be found by the one who is trained by discipline;
but the one who will not listen to correction wanders away.
- ¹⁸Those who hide their hatred of others, must lie to cover it up.
and those who repeat slander are foolish.
- ¹⁹When people talk a lot, sin is sure to follow;
if you are wise, you will always be careful about what you say.
- ²⁰The one who does right
is like pure silver;
there is little value in the heart of the one who does wicked things.

- ²¹What those who do right say benefits many,
but foolish people die because they lack good sense.
- ²²Yahweh gives good gifts that make some people wealthy,
and he does not make them suffer for it.
- ²³Foolish people play games when they do what is wrong,
but people with understanding enjoy wisdom.
- ²⁴What the wicked fear will happen to them;
those who do what is right will get what they hoped for.
- ²⁵Wicked people are like the storm that comes and then it is gone.
but those who do right are like a foundation that lasts forever.
- ²⁶Like vinegar in our mouths or smoke in our eyes,
that is what the lazy man is like to the one who hired him. ²⁷If you give Yahweh the respect he deserves, you will
live for a long time;
but wicked people die before they become old.
- ²⁸Those who do right have hope in their joy,
but the wicked can expect their lives to be short.
- ²⁹Following Yahweh brings protection to those who keep their promises;
but those who do not follow him find out he destroys those who do what is evil.
- ³⁰Those who do right will never be defeated,
but wicked people will not have a home.
- ³¹Wisdom is like a fruit that those who do right bear,
but Yahweh will cut out the deceitful tongue.
- ³²Those who do right know the words Yahweh permits them to speak,
but wicked people say what Yahweh has forbidden.

Chapter 11

- ¹When people use scales that are not correct;
Yahweh is angry that they are stealing from their customers;
he is delighted with those who use correct weights on the scales.
- ²People who are proud live in such a way that always ends in disgrace;
people who are humble are the only ones who can learn about wisdom.

- ³People who keep their promises also make choices that lead them in the right way;
those who cannot be trusted are destroyed by their own dishonesty.
- ⁴Your money will not help you on the day Yahweh judges the world;
but if you do what is right, you will be kept safe from many dangers, even death.
- ⁵When people are honest and good, they know where they should go and what they should do;
but those who do evil find that their wickedness will destroy them.
- ⁶God rescues those who do what is right,
but those who do what is evil become slaves to their desires.
- ⁷When a wicked person dies, all he hoped for in the future is lost;
what he wanted to accomplish with his strength, will never happen.
- ⁸The one who does what is right, Yahweh delivers from trouble;
and Yahweh gives that trouble to the wicked.
- ⁹A person who has no kind of religious faith uses his words to destroy his neighbor;
but people who do right will be saved by the knowledge they have gathered.
- ¹⁰When things go well for those who do what is right, those in their city are happy,
and shouts of joy are heard when wicked people die.
- ¹¹When there are people in the city who please God and they give good gifts to others, the city becomes great;
but the words spoken by the wicked tear down the city.
- ¹²The one who treats his friend with contempt has no good judgment;
a person who has learned what is important says nothing.
- ¹³Those who spread gossip tell secrets to others,
but a person you can trust will not talk about it.
- ¹⁴A nation will be destroyed if it does not have leaders who guide it wisely;
but the nation will have victory when it listens to many advisors.
- ¹⁵If you promise to pay off a loan that is taken by a stranger, you will lose your money.
You will be safe if you refuse to make any kind of agreement to pay someone else's debts.
- ¹⁶A kindhearted woman earns respect;
but violent people take hold of riches.
- ¹⁷By their kindness to others kind people give good gifts to themselves,
but one who is cruel hurts himself by his cruelty.
- ¹⁸Wicked people tell lies to make more money,

but those who do what is right will be paid even more because they earned it.

¹⁹Those who do what is right will live,

but those who do what is wrong will die.

²⁰Yahweh hates those who take good things and they twist them and they do bad things with them,

but he is delighted with those who always do what is right.

²¹It is certain that evil people will not escape their punishment.

and the children of those who do right will be kept safe.

²²If you see a gold ring in a pig's nose,

that is very much like a beautiful woman who does not have good sense.

²³Those who do what is right desire things that result in good,

but the reward of the wicked is that they will experience Yahweh's wrath.

²⁴If a person sows seed, he can expect to harvest a crop;

his few seeds will give him much more;

another person does not plant a crop, and he becomes poor.

²⁵Those who give generously to others will prosper;

if you share your water with other people, you will have enough for yourself, too.

²⁶People will curse the merchant who will not sell them grain,

but they praise the one who sells it.

²⁷If you work hard and go out to find what is good, you will also find good will.

but if you look for evil, you will find it.

²⁸Those who trust in their money will fall down,

but those who do what is right will grow like a healthy tree.

²⁹Those who bring troubles to their families will inherit nothing,

and those who do foolish things will become the servants of those who are wise.

³⁰Those who do what is right will be like a life giving tree,

but acts of violence take away life.

³¹It is sure that those who do what is right will get what they truly deserve;

but even more, the person who does bad things

and the one who sins against Yahweh,

will surely receive what they deserve.

Chapter 12

¹The one who wants to learn will welcome correction.

But the one who does not want to be corrected will remain stupid.

²Yahweh approves of those who are good,

but he condemns those who make evil plans.

³Wickedness is a bad foundation for a person's life.

People who do well are as stable as a tree with deep roots.

⁴A good wife brings praise to her husband,

but a wife who brings shame home is like a disease that destroys his bones.

⁵People who do the right thing make plans that are fair and just.

But advice given by wicked people are filled with lies.

⁶What wicked people say is like setting up a secret attack while planning to commit murder;

but when those who please Yahweh speak, their words keep them out of danger.

⁷Wicked people are put out of power, and they are gone,

but those who do what is right will have many generations and that family will continue for a long time.

⁸A person will be praised according to how much wisdom he has;

but one who takes good things and twists them into bad will be hated.

⁹It is better to be a humble person, just living your life as a servant to others,

than to tell others how important you are, but you have nothing to eat.

¹⁰People who do what is right care about the feeding and health of their animals,

but even when the wicked try to do something for their animals, it becomes an act of cruelty.

¹¹The farmer who works hard in the fields will have enough food to eat,

but those who have no good judgment take on projects that bring them nothing.

¹²Wicked people desire the things that evil people have—things they stole from others.

But people who do what is right have what they have earned; it is their reward.

¹³An evil person is trapped by the wicked things he says,

but those who do right stay away from much trouble.

¹⁴The good words spoken by a person fill his life with good things,

just as his hard work brings him a reward.

¹⁵Foolish people think that what they are doing is always right;

but wise people are willing to listen to advice.

¹⁶A foolish person quickly shows how angry he is;

but those who have good sense ignore it when someone insults them.

¹⁷Speaking the truth is the same as saying what is right,

but a dishonest person tell lies.

¹⁸When a person speaks without thinking, it is like they are taking stabs at you with a sword;

but what wise people say helps to heal the hurts.

¹⁹Speaking the truth will never be out of favor,

but a lie is over in a moment.

²⁰When evil is planned there must be lies within those who carry it out;

but those who give advice that leads to peace, those advisors will celebrate.

²¹Bad things do not happen to those who do what is right,

but wicked people's lives are filled up with troubles.

²²Yahweh detests those who tell lies,

but he is delighted with those who live faithfully.

²³Those with good sense do not reveal all that they know,

but foolish people shout out their foolish thinking.

²⁴Those who are known for their hard work will gain authority over others,

but those who are lazy will be forced to work, even though they hate it.

²⁵When a person is anxious, it is like he is carrying a heavy load,

but a good word makes him feel better.

²⁶The one who does right will be a good guide for his friend,

but wicked people always get lost.

²⁷Lazy people do not even cook the animal they caught,

but those who work hard will acquire wealth that is worth keeping.

²⁸Those who walk in the right way find life

and on that road there is no death.

Chapter 13

¹A wise child pays attention to the teaching his father gives him;

but a stubborn child refuses to listen to correction.

- ²Good things come as the fruit of what one says,
but the desire of the deceitful is to consume more and more violence.
- ³The person who is very careful about what he says preserves his life;
the one who talks too much ruins everything.
- ⁴People who are lazy are hungry for everything, but they will not get anything.
People who work hard will get more than they desired.
- ⁵Anyone who does right hates it when other people tell lies,
but a wicked person brings disgrace on himself.
- ⁶Anyone who does right always acts in ways that are respected,
but the one who does what Yahweh has forbidden ruins his own wicked life.
- ⁷Some people have many possessions, but they have nothing of value;
but other people give all they have away, and yet have the best kind of riches.
- ⁸A rich person may have to use his wealth to buy back his life from a criminal who holds him as a hostage,
but a poor person does not listen even when he is threatened.
- ⁹The one who does what is right shines like a light that gives joy,
but wicked people are like a lamp that will be extinguished.
- ¹⁰Pride works within a person and it results in conflict and arguments,
but those who listen to good advice find the wisdom they need.
- ¹¹People who think too much of themselves will spend all their money;
the one who makes his money by working with his hands will find ways to make his money grow.
- ¹²When hope for the future is postponed, it makes you sick—you feel you will never receive what you long for,
but if you receive what you desire, that will be like a tree that gives life.
- ¹³Those who despise good advice bring the punishment for disobeying upon themselves;
the one who pays attention to the instruction will receive honor.
- ¹⁴The lesson taught by the wise is like a fountain that gives life to all who drink from it,
and they inform you about all the deadly dangers around you.
- ¹⁵Having a mind that understands right and wrong brings you respect,
but the one who twists good gifts for bad purposes—he never reaches his destination.
- ¹⁶Those who have good sense always take action from what they know is true;
a foolish person proves his decisions are folly, and everyone sees it.
- ¹⁷A wicked messenger will not deliver the message,

but bitter enemies are brought together
when the messages are delivered by a dependable messenger.

¹⁸The one who does not learn from the lessons of discipline will be poor, and he will know shame,
but the one who takes the lessons of discipline and learns from them,
honor will find him.

¹⁹When a longing comes true,
it is sweet delight to the one with desires;
and those who are foolish continue to turn toward evil again and again.

²⁰If you spend time with wise people,
by their lives they will show you how you can be wise, as well.

²¹Sinners run away and disasters chase after them,
but those who do what is right find the good is their reward.

²²A good person sets apart money to give his grandchildren when he dies,
but a sinful person will store up his wealth, not knowing that it will be given to the one who does right.

²³A field owned by a poor person can produce much food,
but the poor are victims of injustice more than the rich,
and the crop is not planted.

²⁴A parent who does not train his child in how he should live does not show him any love,
but the one who is careful to train the child in how he should live shows his great love.

²⁵Those who do what is right eat enough food to satisfy their hunger,
but the wicked complain that they are always hungry.

Chapter 14

¹A wise woman holds her family together,
but a foolish woman tears it apart by the foolish things she does.

²The one who honors Yahweh in the way he lives, gives to Yahweh the respect he deserves;
the dishonest person shows his disrespect, and he despises Yahweh.

³Pride grows out of the mouth of the fool, like an offshoot from a tree;
but what wise people say preserves their lives.

⁴Where there are no cattle feeding in the barn, the feeding trough is clean;
but if a farmer only has one ox, still he can grow a very great crop.

⁵You can tell if a witness is reliable, if he tells the truth,
but when a witness breaths out lie after lie, he is a false witness and cannot be depended on.

⁶One who thinks he is better than others, he may seek wisdom, but he will not find it,
but the one who has grown in knowledge can easily learn much more.

⁷Do not stay close to a foolish person: Walk away from him.
There is no knowledge to be learned from him.

⁸The one who has learned much knowledge applies it to his own life; that is wisdom.
The foundation of all folly is the lie.

⁹Fools watch the guilt offering being sacrificed in the temple, and they make fun of it,
but those who please Yahweh are glad to share his favor.

¹⁰A person keeps close inside all his bitterness and disappointment;
and no stranger will ever know all the joy it contains.

¹¹The family of the wicked will be destroyed,
but a little tent where the upright live will grow, like a tree grows into something grand.

¹²A person sees a way, and it appears to be the right way for him to go,
but he does not know that it only leads to death.

¹³A person can be in great pain and still be able to laugh;
a time of great joy may end in grief.

¹⁴The faithless man will receive from Yahweh what he deserves;
but Yahweh will give a good person what is his.

¹⁵Those who have had no instruction believe everything they are told,
but the man who has learned some knowledge thinks about what he will do.

¹⁶A wise person sees evil and is afraid of it, and he turns away from it;
the foolish person boldly throws aside every warning.

¹⁷Those who get angry quickly do foolish things;
people hate those who make evil plans.

¹⁸Those who have not been instructed have foolishness handed to them;
those who have learned a little knowledge are surrounded by it.

¹⁹Evil people will bow down before those who are good,
and the wicked people will bow down at the gates of those who do right.

²⁰The poor are hated even by their own companions,

but the rich have many friends.

²¹It is sinful to have contempt for your neighbors;

but how fortunate are those who do kind things for the poor.

²²Those who plot with evil plans, do they not go astray?

But those who make plans for the good will receive love and faithfulness.

²³If you work hard, you will make some money,

but where there is only talk, it leads to poverty.

²⁴The reward of the wise is the wealth they have,

but the folly of fools only brings them more foolishness.

²⁵A witness who tells the truth, saves the lives of the innocent;

a lying witness is filled with deceit.

²⁶Those give Yahweh the honor he deserves

have much confidence in him;

giving honor to Yahweh will also protect your children.

²⁷Giving Yahweh the honor he deserves is like having a fountain that gives life;

so you can keep away from being trapped by death.

²⁸A king measures his glory by the number of the people in his kingdom,

but if the prince has no people, he is brought to ruin.

²⁹Those who do not quickly become angry have much understanding;

the quick-tempered praise foolishness.

³⁰Being at peace is good for the whole body,

but having evil within, rots the bones.

³¹The one who oppresses a poor person curses Yahweh who made him,

but those who show favor to a poor person honor Yahweh.

³²The wicked person is brought down by his evil actions,

but those who do what is right have a safe home, even in death.

³³Wisdom finds a place to rest in someone who has discernment,

but wisdom lets herself be known even among fools.

³⁴When a people do what is right, the nation does well,

but sin brings disgrace upon any people.

³⁵A king is pleased with a servant who does his work with good judgment,

but the king is angry with any servant who brings shame to him.

Chapter 15

¹A gentle answer turns away anger,

but a harsh reply stirs up anger even more.

²When wise people speak, they give praise to the value of knowledge;

foolish people continually say foolish things.

³Yahweh sees everything that is happening;

he keeps account of the evil and of the good.

⁴A person who can give healing with what they say is like a tree that gives life;

when someone lies to you, it can feel like they have crushed you.

⁵A fool has contempt for his father when he disciplines him,

but the one who learns from correction has insight.

⁶In the families of those who do right there are great treasures,

but the wealth that the wicked have gives them great troubles.

⁷The wise scatter knowledge about like the farmer scatters his seed,

but the hearts of fools are not so generous.

⁸Yahweh hates it when the wicked offer their sacrifices,

but when those who please him pray, he is delighted.

⁹Yahweh hates the way the wicked live,

but he loves the one who runs after what is right.

¹⁰Yahweh will discipline those who lose their way,

and those who hate correction will die.

¹¹The places of death and destruction are known to Yahweh;

how much more does Yahweh know everything within the minds of the people he has made?

¹²The one who thinks he is better than anyone, he resents being corrected by anyone;

he thinks he is so smart, he will never talk with one who is wise.

¹³When people are happy, they have smiles on their faces,

but sadness is so strong it crushes the person.

¹⁴The longing of the one who is wise is to gain more knowledge,

but foolish people only say foolish things.

- ¹⁵Every day for one who is oppressed is misery for him,
but those who have a happy heart, for them life is a never-ending party.
- ¹⁶It is much better to have only a little and to give Yahweh the honor he deserves,
than to have great wealth along with much confusion.
- ¹⁷It is better to have a simple meal with vegetables when there is love in the home,
than to enjoy a delicious meal served by people who hate you.
- ¹⁸When a person is angry, he stirs up more arguments,
but one who does not quickly become angry, he is able to stop an argument and make peace.
- ¹⁹The life of a lazy person is like someone trying to walk through a hedge of thorns,
but those who do what pleases Yahweh are like those who are walking on a level highway.
- ²⁰A wise child brings happiness to his father,
but it is a foolish person who despises his mother.
- ²¹Foolish people enjoy their folly;
those who have insight live a good life.
- ²²When there is no one giving advice, plans go wrong,
but with many advisors, they will succeed.
- ²³People rejoice when they give a good answer,
and how nice is the right word spoken at the right moment.
- ²⁴The path leading to life goes up, away from death;
he follows that way and turns from the place of the dead.
- ²⁵Yahweh destroys the generations of proud people,
but he protects the little owned by a widow.
- ²⁶Yahweh hates what wicked people are thinking about,
but when people say what is kind, they are pure.
- ²⁷The thief brings many troubles to his family,
but the one who refuses to accept bribes will live.
- ²⁸The people who do right think carefully before they answer;
it is like the wicked pour out of their mouths all kinds of evil when they talk.
- ²⁹Yahweh is far away from wicked people,
but he listens to the prayers of those who do what is right.
- ³⁰When people smile, it makes them happy,

and good news brings healing to the body.

³¹If you pay attention when someone corrects you,
you will stay among those who are wise.

³²The one who refuses to follow discipline, despises himself;
the one who receives correction gains understanding as well.

³³The honor that Yahweh deserves will be the lesson that will teach you wisdom,
and then humility comes before honor.

Chapter 16

¹People make plans out of their longings deep within them,
but it is Yahweh who tells him what will happen.

²A person sees nothing wrong with what he does,
but Yahweh measures every part of what a person does according to his purposes.

³When you work, give all your ideas and your labor to Yahweh,
and your plans will be successful.

⁴When Yahweh made everything, he made them so they would all accomplish something for him.
He has even made the wicked for the day when there is great trouble.

⁵Yahweh hates those whose pride comes from deep within them.
But you can be sure of this: They will still be punished for their pride.

⁶Love and faithfulness will cover over sin and forgive sin.
When people give Yahweh the respect he deserves,
they will be able to turn away from doing what is evil.

⁷When a person pleases Yahweh by the way he lives his life,
he even causes that person's enemies to get along with him.

⁸It is better to have a little money and to follow what is right,
than to have a large amount of money and to live by spreading injustice.

⁹From deep within a person come the plans he makes,
but Yahweh leads the person in each step he takes.

¹⁰A king can speak with inspired judgment;
and when he makes a ruling, it is good and true.

¹¹Honest scales come from Yahweh;

it is he who decided how much each unit should weigh.

¹²We should hate it when kings do wicked things,
for the throne is set on a firm foundation when the king does what is right.

¹³A king is happy when he hears someone speaking what is right;
and he loves the one who is direct when he talks.

¹⁴If a king becomes angry, his wrath is a danger that can kill;
so wise people will try to calm him so that he is not too angry.

¹⁵In a king's smile there is life;
when he is happy, he is like the cloud that brings the spring rain.

¹⁶Becoming wise is better than having gold;
getting good understanding is better than having silver.

¹⁷The one who lives in the way that is right will turn away from doing evil;
whoever is careful about how he lives his life
will preserve his life.

¹⁸Pride happens to someone first, and then he perishes.
If someone thinks he is better than others,
he will have a terrible fall.

¹⁹It is better to be humble and live among the poor
than to receive a portion of what proud people took by force.

²⁰Those who think about what they have been taught
find many good things in the lesson;
how fortunate are those who put their trust in Yahweh.

²¹One who has wisdom deep inside him is given the title, "discerning,"
and those who speak in a way that can be understood
and can motivate their hearers, teach well.

²²When you understand, it is as if you have found a fountain of life within you;
but fools find their punishment when their foolishness comes back to them.

²³From deep within him, the wise person speaks from the insight he has learned;
and so when he speaks he has the power to persuade others.

²⁴Kind words are like a honeycomb;
they are sweet for us to take in,

and they give healing to our bodies.

²⁵A person lives out his life and he thinks he is doing what is right,
but when he comes to the end of his life, all he finds is death.

²⁶A worker's appetite drives him to work harder,
his hunger urges him to keep working.

²⁷A worthless man digs and digs until he finds something
he can use to embarrass someone and cause them trouble;
and what he says about them is like a fire that burns the field.

²⁸A person who has no morals stirs up conflict between people;
and those who spread rumors pull friends apart.

²⁹A violent person tells lies to his friend,
and he leads him down a path that will never find what is good.

³⁰The one who winks the eye is signaling to others it is time to begin their terrible plot;
those who press their lips together, they do evil things.

³¹Gray hair is like a glorious crown;
it is given to those who live their lives
by doing what is right.

³²The one who is slow to get angry is stronger than a warrior;
the one who is self-controlled is mightier than one who conquers a city by force.

³³The stones making up the "lot" are thrown into a person's lap,
but Yahweh decides on which side of the stones they will stop rolling.

Chapter 17

¹It is better to eat a dry piece of bread and not have strife
than to live in a house where quarreling is as regular as feasting.

²A slave who acts wisely will rule over the son of his master
if that son does shameful things.

That slave will receive a share of the inheritance and will be treated like one of his master's sons.

³Silver is put into the crucible to be refined, and gold is put into the furnace to be made pure,
but it is Yahweh who makes people pure.

⁴Those who do what is evil pay attention to the person who talks in wicked ways,

and those who tell lies listen to those who speak in order to make trouble.

⁵The one who makes fun of those who are poor insults Yahweh who made him;
Yahweh will punish those who are happy when someone else has troubles.

⁶Grandchildren bring honor and respect to the aged,
and parents bring honor to their children.

⁷A fool is not able to give an eloquent speech;
even more is it wrong to lie to someone with a royal title.

⁸A bribe works like magic for the one who is giving the bribe;
everything he tries to do by giving bribes succeeds.

⁹You must learn not to be offended by the one you love,
but if you bring up something to your friend that hurt you, and you do it over and over,
that will pull the best of friends apart.

¹⁰A rebuke to someone with understanding goes deeper into him
than trying to teach a fool by hitting him a hundred times with a stick.

¹¹An evil person is only interested in disobeying the rules;
he deserves a messenger who will be cruel to him.

¹²You would be better off meeting a mother bear who had been robbed of her cubs
than to meet a fool who is being foolish.

¹³If someone gives back evil for the good that was given to him,
evil will stay in his family.

¹⁴Starting a quarrel is like pumping water and letting it run everywhere;
it is much better to walk away before it starts.

¹⁵When a court sets the wicked free and condemns those who do what is right,
Yahweh hates both of these actions.

¹⁶There is no benefit for a fool when he pays money to learn about wisdom;
no matter how much he tries, he will not be able to learn about wisdom.

¹⁷A friend loves you all the time,
and when you are in trouble, there is no one better than a brother to help you.

¹⁸One having no good judgment will make a contract he cannot pay,
and he will even make a promise to pay the money his neighbor owes.

¹⁹The one who loves to have arguments, that person also loves the sin that lies behind the conflict;

one thing leads to another: The one who makes the threshold of his door too high, it is sure to make someone break the bones in his foot.

²⁰A person who is dishonest because of what is within him, he will never find what is good,
and the one who tells lies will fall into trouble.

²¹The father who has a fool brings sadness into his life;
the father of a fool cannot live a happy life.

²²Being cheerful is like medicine that makes you feel better,
but when you are crushed by sadness, it is as if every bone within you could break with only a touch.

²³A wicked person accepts a bribe in such a way as no one could see him,
so the bribe would change the verdict in his favor.

²⁴The one who has begun to understand, he knows that he must also now go after wisdom.
However, the foolish person has bold plans and impossible dreams,
and he looks for them no matter how far away they may be.

²⁵A foolish child brings a father great sadness,
and regret to the mother who gave birth to him.

²⁶It cannot be good to punish someone who does what is right,
and if a good man with moral character is punished by the law, this can never be good.

²⁷The one who has learned knowledge, learned to speak well using few words,
and the one who has understanding, does not lose his temper.

²⁸When a fool keeps silent, some may think he is very wise;
when he keeps his mouth shut, even a fool looks intelligent.

Chapter 18

¹The one who keeps himself away from other people will only live for his own desires,
and he never acts with good judgment.

²A foolish person does not enjoy understanding anything;
he only wants to tell others what he thinks.

³A wicked person comes, and with them comes the contempt they have for other people—
and then comes shame and disgrace following along.

⁴The words a man speaks are like the deep waters of an ocean
or a fountain that flows with wisdom.

⁵When the wicked are treated with special honor, it is not good,
and it is not good to refuse to give justice to those who do what is right.

⁶A foolish person says things that start arguments;
he says things that make other people want to beat him with a stick.

⁷A foolish person brings himself to ruin by the things he says;
his very words set a trap in which he will be caught.

⁸When a person gossips, his words are as sweet to other people as candy is in their mouths,
and they love to listen to them.

⁹The person who does a poor job when he is working
is a relative to the one who destroys everything.

¹⁰The name of Yahweh is like a castle that can never be overrun;
those who do what is right run for safety into it, and in the fortress of his name, they are safe.

¹¹The wealthy person depends on his wealth as a city depends on its fortifications;
he thinks it protects him as well as a high wall.

¹²When a person is about to be ruined, it is his proud heart that brings his destruction,
but before a person can gain great honor, he must first learn to become humble.

¹³A person who gives you an answer before he listens to you—
there is nothing more foolish
and nothing that gives him more shame.

¹⁴A person may survive a terrible sickness in his body,
but if he feels his inner self is crushed, how can he survive?

¹⁵Intelligent people have a desire to get more and more knowledge,
and wise people will find someone to teach them even more knowledge.

¹⁶If you take a gift to an important person, you will open the way to allow you to talk to him.

¹⁷The first person to present his case before a judge seems right
until the other side comes and questions him.

¹⁸When there are two strong people having a dispute,
casting lots can help to settle the dispute.

¹⁹If you offend your brother, finding a way to have peace with him again
may be harder than waging a battle to win a city.
and having an argument is more difficult to overcome

than breaking down the bars of a castle.

²⁰The words a person speaks can bring satisfaction to himself,
like the food he eats satisfies his stomach.

²¹People are able to kill others or keep them alive by means of what they say.
And there is danger for those who love the power of their speaking.

²²The one who finds a wife, finds something so good it is a gift to bless his life,
and it is Yahweh who gives him this wonderful gift.

²³A poor person desperately begs for mercy, but a rich person is rude when he answers.

²⁴One person says that he has many friends, but his life is ruined by them;
but there is a friend who stands with us through everything,
and he is always close at our side, even closer than a brother.

Chapter 19

¹Compare a poor person who keeps his promises,
with a fool who is full of lies.

²And consider, having desire without knowledge
is like running so fast that you miss the path you want to take.

³The folly of a fool destroys his life,
but he becomes furious with Yahweh for his troubles.

⁴Those who are wealthy easily find many friends, but a poor person will find that his poverty separates him from
the one friend he had.

⁵A person who lies in order to become a friend will be punished for taking advantage,
just as the one whose every word he speaks is a lie, he will not escape.

⁶When a person is generous with their gifts, many people will ask for favors,
it seems that everyone is a friend of the one who gives many gifts.

⁷All the brothers of one who is poor hate him;
and even more do his friends hate him, and they go far away from him;
he calls out to them, but they have left.

⁸The one who makes every effort to learn about wisdom, loves himself;
having understanding helps you know what is good and what is not.

⁹The ones who lie when they give testimony will be punished,

but the one whose every word is a lie, he will die.

¹⁰When a fool lives in luxury—it is not right,
and it is even worse for a slave to rule over princes.

¹¹A person with good sense is slow to get angry,
and it is to his honor that he overlooks it when someone does him wrong.

¹²What is the wrath of the king like? It is like the roaring of a young lion,
but his kindness is like the dew on the grass.

¹³A foolish child will ruin a father.

A wife who is always quarreling will upset her husband like water that is constantly dripping.

¹⁴We can inherit houses and money from our parents,
but a sensible wife is from Yahweh.

¹⁵The one who is lazy finds that sleep comes easily to him,
but anyone who refuses to work will go hungry.

¹⁶The one who follows the command he was taught puts a guard over his life,
but the one who does not think about how he lives his life will die.

¹⁷One who is kind to the poor, it is as if he were lending to Yahweh;
and Yahweh will pay him for what he did.

¹⁸Train your children and give them discipline while it is still possible to rescue them;
but do not allow them to offend you so much that you consider taking their lives.

¹⁹A hot-tempered person will pay a price for his anger;
if you rescue him after he has had an outburst, you will have to do it again and again.

²⁰Pay attention to good guidance and let others teach you
so that you can become wise by the end of your life.

²¹A person has many plans that come from within him,
but Yahweh has his own plans, and he will carry them out.

²²A person wants loyalty,
it is better to be poor than to tell a lie to a judge in court in order to get money.

²³Anyone who has respect for Yahweh will live a long life;
such a person who has this respect for Yahweh will be satisfied,
and will come to no harm.

²⁴The lazy person puts his hand in the dish;

he is not able to raise his hand up to his mouth to eat.

²⁵If you punish someone who mocks others,
an uninstructed person will learn how to be prudent.
If you correct someone who has understanding,
he will gain more knowledge.

²⁶Someone who steals from his father and alienates his mother
brings shame and disgrace to himself.

²⁷My son, if you will not listen to the teaching,
you will wander away from the words of knowledge.

²⁸A lying witness laughs at anyone who acts justly,
and wicked people act sinfully as easily as they eat food.

²⁹Yahweh is ready to punish those who make themselves out to be better than other people,
and he is ready to flog the backs of fools.

Chapter 20

¹Wine makes you loud, and strong drink makes you foolish;
whoever lets alcohol lead them to where they get lost is not wise.

²The king's wrath makes people as afraid as if they were facing a young lion roaring at them;
the person who makes a king angry is giving up his own life.

³It is an honor to stay out of an argument,
but every fool is ready to join one.

⁴The lazy person is not willing to plow his crops again in autumn,
and when it is harvest time, he looks, but there is nothing growing in his field.

⁵The purposes within a person's life are like waters in a deep well,
but a person who has understanding is able to draw them out.

⁶Many people proclaim that they can be trusted to do what they promise,
but it is very difficult to find one who can really be trusted.

⁷The person who always does right—
how fortunate will be his children who follow after him.

⁸A king who sits on his throne to act as a judge
can distinguish between all the kinds of evil before him just by looking at them.

⁹No one can truthfully say, "I have kept my heart pure, and I am free from my sins."

¹⁰Uneven weights, improperly marked, and unequal measures, that favor the one who is selling,
Yahweh hates both of them.

¹¹Also, even a youth is known by what he does,
it is clear whether what he does is pure and respectable or not.

¹²Ears that hear and eyes that see—
Yahweh made them both.

¹³If you love to sleep all the time, you will become poor;
stay awake when you should be at work and you will have plenty to eat.

¹⁴"It is no good," the buyer says when he is bargaining with you about the price.
But after he buys it, he goes and boasts to his friends what a good price he bought it for.

¹⁵Consider the value of gold and many expensive jewels,
but the words of the one who has knowledge are like precious jewels.

¹⁶Take the expensive coat of the person who guarantees a loan for a stranger, so it can be sold if the debt is not paid back.

And if he makes a pledge for an immoral woman, hold his coat as a guarantee for the loan he makes.

¹⁷Bread gotten by telling a lie, may taste sweet,
but later his mouth will be like it was full of gravel, because of his lies.

¹⁸Good plans are made in consultation with good advisors,
and only with wise advisors giving their advice should anyone go to war.

¹⁹A gossip tells secrets,
so stay away from people who talk too much.

²⁰If a person curses his father or his mother,
his life will be put out as a light that is snuffed out.

²¹An inheritance that comes to a person quickly, may do some good at the beginning,
but later it will do less good for the person who received it.

²²Do not say, "I will pay you back for the wrong you did to me."
Wait for Yahweh and he will take care of the matter.

²³Yahweh detests those who use dishonest scales
and weights that are not accurate.

²⁴Yahweh is the one who directs the way a person will go.

So then, how can someone understand where he is going?

²⁵It is dangerous to declare that something is holy to Yahweh,
and it is worse to think about the meaning of holiness only after you have made a vow.

²⁶A king who is wise will separate the wicked from among his people;
then he will severely punish those wicked people.

²⁷The life-giving spirit within a man is the light shining from Yahweh within us,
it shines deep within and shows what is hidden deep inside us.

²⁸Love and faithfulness preserve the life of the king;
his throne is made strong by steadfast love.

²⁹The honor of young people is seen in how strong they are,
but the splendor of old people is in their gray hair.

³⁰When we are beaten, the wound that results may cleanse away evil,
and beatings make our inmost self clean.

Chapter 21

¹The motives of the king are directed like a stream of water by Yahweh;
he diverts the king like he directs the flow of water, in any way he wants.

²When a person looks at his own life, everything he does may seem right to him,
but what matters is what Yahweh thinks about what he does.

³Doing what is right and just is more acceptable to Yahweh
than offering sacrifices to him.

⁴When you show people that you think you are better than they,
and add to that the pride you have within you—this shines like a light and it tells others you are a wicked person—
they are examples of sin.

⁵Those who work hard and who carry out their plans will be successful,
but everyone who takes action too quickly and with little planning, make themselves poor.

⁶When someone becomes rich because he tells lies,
that wealth fades away like the mist; that wealth will kill him.

⁷When wicked people act with violence, they are destroyed by their own violence,
because they refuse to do what is right.

⁸A guilty person follows a path covered with lies,

but the innocent chooses to do what is right.

⁹It is better to live alone in the corner of a housetop
than inside a house with a wife who always wants to argue with you.

¹⁰The wicked man craves evil more than anything;
and when he looks at his neighbor,
the wicked man's eyes reveal
that he is not going to be kind to his neighbor.

¹¹When a person who acts like he is better than other people is punished,
the simple—who do not know about right and wrong—are taught an important lesson,
and if you teach one who is wise, they can learn even more.

¹²One who does what is right watches the house where evil people live,
and he confronts their wickedness and brings them to justice.

¹³When the poor cried out for help, there was a person who refused to listen to their cries,
but when he cried out, because he covered his ears to their cries, no one heard his cries.

¹⁴Give a gift to a person who is angry with you, and it may turn away his anger;
a secret gift may help a person who is angry at you to calm down.

¹⁵When there is justice, those who love what is right are happy,
but when there is justice, it brings great fear to those who do what is evil.

¹⁶A person who does not understand right and wrong, will get lost when he tries to make decisions,
he will only rest when he is dead.

¹⁷Love pleasure and it will make you poor;
you cannot be rich and love to drink wine and eat expensive foods.

¹⁸A person who does right is honored much more than a wicked man,
and a good man is worth far more than one who never keeps his promise.

¹⁹It is better to live alone in a desert
than with a wife who is always stirring up conflicts and never stops complaining.

²⁰Those who are wise have very precious treasures and they live very well,
but foolish people waste all they have.

²¹A person who does right and is kind,
lives a good life, makes wise decisions, and receives honor from others.

²²When a wise leader goes up against a city of mighty warriors,

he knows how to bring down the defenses of the city and he conquers it.

²³Be careful, if you could put a guard to watch over the words that come out of your mouth and tongue, you would keep away from a lot of trouble.

²⁴The mocker thinks he is better than other people, and his actions come from his pride and his arrogance.

²⁵The things that the lazy person chooses to do will kill him; he refuses to work.

²⁶All day long he desires things—he could not desire for more things—but whoever does right gives gifts to others, and he never holds back anything that is good.

²⁷When the wicked decide to give an offering to Yahweh, Yahweh hates it, and Yahweh hates it even more when the wicked man comes to worship Yahweh in order to get something for himself.

²⁸Those who lie about other people, will die, but the one who takes time to listen—when he says something, people will remember it.

²⁹The wicked man acts as if he were strong, but an honest man has thought about what to do and is certain about it.

³⁰Can there be any wisdom, any understanding, or any advice, that is wiser than Yahweh?

³¹The groomsman prepares the horse for the day of battle, but the outcome of the battle, the winner or the loser, is determined by Yahweh.

Chapter 22

¹Being a person who keeps his word is more important than having great riches, and being a person who everyone respects for doing right, is better than having silver and gold.

²People who are rich and people who are poor have at least one thing in common—Yahweh made both of them.

³One who has good sense takes cover when he sees trouble coming, but those who have no experience or knowledge rush ahead into danger.

⁴When a person is humble and gives Yahweh the respect he deserves, these are his rewards: Riches, and honor, and life.

⁵Where the perverse walk, their way is like a road covered with thorns, and there are traps in every step. When you guard your own life from evil, you will stay away from all these dangers.

⁶A child must be shown the way to live and the direction he should go,
and when he reaches old age, he will stay on that same path.

⁷The fact is that the rich often have power over the poor,
and one who borrows money is almost like a slave to the one who lends him the money.

⁸If you plant the seeds of wickedness, you can expect a crop of trouble,
and when you use a rod to discipline your child,
but you use it when you are furious, it will do no good.

⁹The one who looks for people to help, Yahweh will give many good gifts,
because he considered it important to share his food with the poor.

¹⁰If you throw out the conceited person, out will go all kinds of conflict with him.
No one will quarrel or insult anyone else when he is gone.

¹¹When a person loves to do something just because he wants to do what is good and right—
he is sincere, and his speech is filled with kindness
—the king will be his friend.

¹²Yahweh gives protection to knowledge, to keep it safe,
just as surely as he makes the lying promises of the betrayer fail.

¹³A lazy person calls out, "There is a lion in the street! If I go out, I will be killed!"

¹⁴The words spoken by an adulteress will draw you in, and it will be as if you have fallen into a deep and dangerous pit!

All those who fall into that pit will be in trouble,
but what is worse, they will experience Yahweh's anger for what they have done.

¹⁵Stupid and silly things are bound up within a child,
and they come out in foolishness;
but correcting a child with discipline drives the folly far away.

¹⁶The one who makes his money by taking advantage of the poor,
or by giving more money to the wealthy,
Yahweh will bring him into poverty.

¹⁷Now listen to what those who are wise have said;
give it all your attention and learn the knowledge you will need if you are to become wise.

¹⁸It will be good for you to make them the guiding principles you live by,
and be able to repeat all of them to others.

- ¹⁹The most important thing is for you to trust in Yahweh,
and so I am teaching them to you, yes, even to you.
- ²⁰I have written thirty of these sayings for you to learn;
sayings to give you advice and to teach you what you do not know.
- ²¹These lessons show you what is true and they teach you with faithful lessons,
so you may give reliable and true answers to those who sent you.
- ²²Anyone can rob a poor person. Do not do it.
And do not hurt them who are begging at the city gate,
- ²³for Yahweh stands to defend them,
and he will take the life of those who stole from the poor.
- ²⁴Do not become a friend with one whose life is controlled by his anger,
and do not associate with a person who rages in his terrible wrath,
- ²⁵or you will learn to be like him,
and your anger will become like a trap, a trap that will take charge of your life.
- ²⁶Be careful that you do not shake hands and promise to pay for the debts of others,
and do not make or sign a pledge so another person can take out a loan.
- ²⁷For if you cannot pay it back,
they will surely come and take away everything from you, even your bed on which you sleep.
- ²⁸The ancient boundary stones show where the property lines are. Do not take them away or move them. Your
ancestors put them there. Leave them alone.
- ²⁹One who learns a trade and is skillful at it will become a servant of kings.
Because of his achievements he will not serve mere ordinary people.

Chapter 23

- ¹When you sit down to eat a meal with ruler of a country,
think carefully about what is in front of you.
- ²It is said, "put a knife to your throat" if you think of eating a lot of food,
because it would be foolish to eat too much at such an important event.
- ³Do not crave the special and expensive food the ruler enjoys;
the food will deceive you.
- ⁴Do not work so much that you are always tired, so you can become rich;

be wise and know when you should stop and rest.

⁵As soon as you look at the money, it will be gone;

it will be as if it suddenly took up wings

and flew up like an eagle, up into the sky.

⁶Do not eat with an evil man—he will gaze at your food for a long time—

do not desire his fine food,

⁷because he will be thinking about how much your food cost him,

and he will say to you, “Eat and drink,”

but that is not what he will really be thinking.

⁸When you realize what he is really thinking, you will want to vomit what you have eaten;

and you will have wasted all the compliments you gave about the fine meal he prepared.

⁹Do not waste time talking to a fool;

he will only despise the wise things that you say.

¹⁰Again, do not remove the ancient boundary stone. It is a marker for the property lines;

and do not claim land that is set apart for orphans to work,

¹¹because the One who redeems them is strong,

and he will plead their case against you.

¹²Pay attention to what you are learning,

and listen to the words of knowledge.

¹³Do not refuse to discipline your children;

if you punish them, they will not die,

¹⁴and if you beat them with the rod of discipline,

you may save their lives from death.

¹⁵My son, if you have taken wisdom deep within yourself,

I will be very happy,

¹⁶and I will be sincerely glad

when you say what is right.

¹⁷Do not envy sinful people;

but give Yahweh the respect he deserves, all day long.

¹⁸If you respect him, you will have a life in the future,

and Yahweh will certainly do for you what you are confidently expecting him to do.

- ¹⁹My son, listen to me so you may become wise,
and think about the way you live your life.
- ²⁰Do not associate with those who get drunk with wine,
or with those who are eat far too much food,
- ²¹because drunkards and gluttons will become poor;
and they will sleep so much that they will have nothing but rags to wear.
- ²²Pay attention to your father who brought you into the world,
and do not hate your mother when she is old.
- ²³When you study wisdom, think of it as buying truth, but never selling it;
and the same for wisdom, and with discipline, and also with understanding;
let it be as though you were buying them so you can keep them for the rest of your life.
- ²⁴The father of a child who does what is right will be very happy;
any man who has a wise son will be very happy because of him.
- ²⁵Make your father and mother proud,
and let your mother be glad.
- ²⁶My son, take what I say and put it deep within you,
and pay attention to the way that I live.
- ²⁷A prostitute is like a very deep pit, that is easy to fall into, but difficult to get out;
another man's wife is a narrow pit; just as dangerous as a deep pit, but of a different kind.
- ²⁸The immoral woman is waiting for you, waiting like a robber waits for his victim;
and they cause many men to become liars and traitors to those who love them.
- ²⁹Who is it who had trouble? Who has sorrows? Who has conflicts and fights?
Who has quarreling? Who is wounded for no reason?
Whose eyes are always bloodshot because they drank too much or ate too much?
- ³⁰It is those who drink too much wine
and those who drink the mixed wine.
- ³¹Do not look with pleasure at red wine when it sparkles in the cup,
and it goes down the throat smoothly.
- ³²But, in the last, it bites you like a poisonous snake.
- ³³It makes you see strange things,
and within you, you say perverse things when you are drunk.

³⁴You will think you are on a ship that is tossing on the sea;
you will be like someone who is trying to sleep up on the rigging of the boat.

³⁵You will say, "I think that someone struck me, but he did not hurt me;
They beat me, but I did not feel it.
When will I wake up
in order that I can drink some more wine?"

Chapter 24

¹Do not want what evil people have;
do not desire them for friends,
²because they are plotting to do violence;
they talk about making trouble.
³It takes wisdom to build a house,
and by understanding the builder exercises his craft, and a house is made solid on its foundation.
⁴It takes knowledge to fill the rooms of the house
with all the beautiful and expensive decorations.
⁵A man who has wisdom has strength,
and a person with knowledge is mightier than the one who is strong,
⁶for with wise guidance you can wage a war successfully,
and by the advice of many advisors there will be victory.
⁷Wisdom is something that a fool cannot understand;
at the gate where the elders gather, the fool has nothing to say.
⁸There is a man who does evil and makes plots—he is called the Master of Schemes.
⁹A foolish plan is not only folly, it is sin;
when people tell the truth, they hate those who are conceited and mock everyone.
¹⁰When trouble comes, and you are terrified like a coward,
then your strength is small.
¹¹Rescue the ones who are being carried away to the slaughter;
they stagger and fall—hold them back from the one who would kill them.
¹²If you say, "I did not know that those people needed any help," then think about this:
God knows why we do everything, so he also knows why you said those people needed no help.

God sees everything you do in this life, so he certainly understands why you said that about those people.
He will certainly pay you back—and everyone else, too—for the harm they have done.

¹³My son, eat honey, because it tastes good;
the honeycomb is sweet.

¹⁴Wisdom is like the honeycomb, it feeds your life, if you can find it.
If you can find it, you will have a future,
and you will come to the future with hope that will not be cut short.

¹⁵Do not be like wicked people who hide and wait to attack the home of those who do what is right.
Do not commit a violent attack on the place where the good man rests!

¹⁶Even if good people fall down seven times,
they always get back up,
but when a disaster comes to the wicked,
they are ruined by it.

¹⁷When your enemy falls, do not rejoice,
and do not be happy when he stumbles,

¹⁸for Yahweh will see how you treat your enemy, and if he disapproves how you treat him,
Yahweh may turn his wrath from your enemy and put it on you.

¹⁹Do not worry about those who do what is evil,
and do not be jealous of them,

²⁰for there is no future for the wicked;
they are like a lamp whose light will soon be put out.

²¹My son, give to Yahweh and give to the king the respect each of them deserves,
and do not associate with anyone who rebels against either Yahweh or the king;

²²because disasters will suddenly come upon those rebels,
and no one knows how terrible the disasters will be that will come from both Yahweh and from the king. ²³Here are
more things that wise people have said:

It is wrong for judges to decide matters unfairly.

²⁴If they say to people who are guilty, "You are innocent,"
they will be cursed by foreign peoples, and hated by nations.

²⁵But if judges say that guilty people must be punished,
things will go well for those judges, and they will receive gifts of goodness.

²⁶Answering honestly—that is the best thing a person can do.

²⁷First, do the work that needs to be done outside,
and prepare your fields;
and after that, build your house.

²⁸Do not give testimony against your neighbor if there is no reason for it,
and do not deceive people when you are telling what you know.

²⁹Do not say, “I will do to him what he did to me;
I will pay him back for what he did to me.”

³⁰I walked by the field of a lazy man,
past the vineyard of a man who had no good judgment.

³¹Thorns grew there and the stone wall had fallen down.

³²When I saw that, I thought about it, and I learned this:

³³A little sleep, a little nap, a little folding of the hands to rest—and while you rest,

³⁴poverty will come to you like a thief who steals from you,
and poverty will come like an armed soldier who attacks you.

Chapter 25

¹Here are more wise sayings of Solomon that were written down by the men of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.

²God honors himself when he hides something so people cannot know it.
But it is to the honor of kings to search out the things that God has hidden.

³What kings think is above the way peasants think; they are like the heavens, they are above us all;
and all kings have the same deep burdens that others cannot understand.

⁴Silver cannot be used by the metal worker,
unless the silver is heated and dross is removed from it;

⁵just as the dross is removed, even so, if wicked men are removed from the king's court,
his throne will be more secure, and he will be able to do what is right.

⁶When you stand in front of a king, do not bring attention to yourself
and do not stand in the place set aside for those the king is honoring.

⁷It is better if someone important invites you, saying, “Come up and sit closer to the king,”

than to embarrass you in front of an important nobleman by making you move so that you now sit far away from the king.

When you witness something that gives you concern,

⁸you should not quickly bring the matter to trial,
unless you are very sure about it.

because your neighbor may have a good explanation for what you saw.

⁹If you and your neighbor are having a disagreement,
settle it between yourselves, and do not tell others any secret you have learned about;

¹⁰for others might find out what you have done,
and you would be ashamed;

and from that time on, you will have a bad reputation.

¹¹Use the right words and a phrase put together to say exactly what you mean;
this is as delightful as seeing designs of gold in a silver bowl.

¹²When a wise person rebukes someone who is willing to listen to him,
it is as priceless as a gold ring or jewelry made of finest gold.

¹³A messenger who is reliable and on time, gives delight to those who sent him,
to them he is like the cold of snow at harvest time, that refreshes the ground.

¹⁴When someone boasts about a gift he is going to give, but never gives it,
he is like the clouds and the wind that do not bring rain.

¹⁵With patient persuasion even a ruler's mind can be changed,
like the proverb that says, 'a soft tongue can break a bone.'

¹⁶If you find some honey, eat just a little,
because if you eat too much, you could vomit it up.

¹⁷Do not go to your neighbor's house too often;
he may get tired of you, and if you do not stop, he could even grow to hate you.

¹⁸To falsely accuse others in court
is like attacking them with a club used in battle, or with a sword, or with sharp arrows.

¹⁹Depending on an unreliable person during times of trouble
is like having a bad tooth or a foot that slips and makes you fall.

²⁰Singing a song to someone who is feeling sad,
it is as unhelpful as taking off a coat on a very cold day,
or pouring vinegar into soda, making it bubble.

²¹If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat;

if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;

²²that will be the equal to pouring coals of fire on his head, without doing him any harm,
and Yahweh will reward you for doing that.

²³When wind blows from the north, it will certainly rain;
it is just as certain that someone who tells secrets about others will make people angry.

²⁴It is better to live alone in the corner of a housetop
than inside a house with a wife who always wants to argue with you.

²⁵When you receive news from a far away country,
that is like giving cold water to a person who is thirsty.

²⁶A good person who falls before the wicked,
that is as bad as a spring that becomes muddied or a fountain that becomes polluted.

²⁷It is not good to eat too much honey;
that is like searching for more honor when you already have honor.

²⁸A person who cannot control himself
is like a city with no way to keep out enemies; its walls have fallen down.

Chapter 26

¹When it snows in the summer, or when it rains in the harvest,
that is what it is like when a fool gets honor—
honor for him comes at the wrong time, and the wrong place.

²A sparrow flies here and there flittering around, and a swallow darts back and forth when it flies,
that is like someone speaking a curse against you—but it cannot land on you.

³A horse needs a whip to make it move, and a donkey must have a bridle in its mouth, or it will not carry its load.
In the same way, a fool needs someone to beat him on his back to get him to do anything.

⁴Do not reply to a fool when he is trying to draw you into his foolishness,
or you will be just as much a fool as he is.

⁵Give a fool an answer that will be just as foolish as his question,
and that may open his eyes so he can see that he is not as wise as he thinks.

⁶If you entrust an important message to be delivered by a fool,
that would be as foolish as cutting of your own feet, and then taking a drink of poison.

⁷A lame man cannot use his legs; they hang down and are useless,

as useless as when fools are reciting proverbs to one another that they do not understand..

⁸When you tie a stone into a sling so it cannot be thrown,
that is like one who gives honor to a fool,
for no matter how much you praise him,
it will never do him any good.

⁹When a drunk man picks up a bush full of thorns
and starts to swing it around at people,
that is as helpful as a fool reciting proverbs,
people stand back and try to get away from him.

¹⁰An archer who aims and shoots arrows at people standing around him,
is as dangerous as one who hires a fool
or he takes so little care that he hires the next person who comes along.

¹¹When you see a dog return to his vomit,
that is just like a fool who does the same foolish thing over and over again.

¹²Do you know someone who has this idea about himself—
he thinks he is a very wise person?
It is easier to teach a fool than him.

¹³The lazy person has many reasons for not working—
you might hear him say, "But there is a lion in the street!"
or "Oh, there is a lion in the market!"

¹⁴When you see a door swing back and forth on its hinges,
that is just like one who is lazy, when he is lying on his bed, turning back and forth.

¹⁵One who is lazy might reach down with his hand to get some food,
but he does not have the energy to put the food into his mouth.

¹⁶The one who is lazy considers himself to be very wise,
more wise than seven men who are known for their insight.

¹⁷Someone who walks by a dog lying on the ground, who then reaches down and pulls its ears;
he is like someone who hears an argument as he is walking by,
and he gets involved, and becomes angry
and then he takes sides and joins in—
even though he had nothing to do with it.

18-19Who is like an insane person who shoots burning arrows in every direction?

One who lies to his neighbor!

He makes an excuse to his neighbor and tells him,

"I was only joking;"

but just like the madman's arrows,

what he said has set everything on fire.

20The fire goes out when there is no more wood to burn;

and so arguments stop when no one is gossiping.

21As charcoal can ignite into burning coal and a log of wood into a fire;

so the one who argues sets anger ablaze.

22The gossip tells stories that are like sweet treats to eat;

people eat them like candy until they are filled.

23A shining glaze applied with great heat, covers the clay pot,

and that is like the fiery words that cover an evil heart.

24The one who is filled with hate, by the words he speaks, he hides his true feelings;

and he stores up more and more lies within himself.

25He may speak kind words, but you should not believe them,

because deep within him is everything that Yahweh despises.

26Even though he covers up his hatred by his lies,

everyone will realize how wicked he is.

27One who digs a pit will fall into it;

and a stone rolls back on the one who tried to push it up a hill.

28The one who lies hates the people he destroys;

just as much as the person who uses flattery causes terrible destruction.

Chapter 27

1Do not boast about what will happen tomorrow,

because you do not know what will come to you during that day.

2Do not praise yourself; let someone else praise you.

It is better for someone you do not know to praise you,

than for you to praise yourself.

³If you think about how heavy a stone can be, or how much sand can weigh—

then you will understand that the trouble a fool causes is harder to carry than both of those things.

⁴If you think about how cruel can be people who rage at others, and how angry people can attack others like a flood of water,

then think about how jealous people are even worse;

no one can resist being harmed by a jealous person.

⁵It is better to offer a rebuke out in the open, than to have a love that is hidden.

⁶A wound from a friend is better than kisses from an enemy.

⁷When a person is walking along and he has a full stomach, he may step on a honeycomb because he is not hungry;

but if he were very hungry, even bitter things would taste sweet to him.

⁸When a man wanders away from his home,

he is acting like a bird that stays far from its nest.

⁹The aroma of perfume and the scent of incense can help to make a person feel happy;

and we most appreciate friends who give us good advice.

¹⁰Do not forget your friend or a friend of your father;

and when you have a problem and you need help,

do not go to your brother's home.

When there is trouble, a neighbor who lives close by

is better than a brother who lives far away.

¹¹My son, if you become wise, you will make me happy;

so I will be able to give an answer to anyone who argues against me.

¹²One who has good sense takes cover when he sees trouble coming,

but those who have no experience or knowledge rush ahead into danger.

¹³Take a man's garment as security when he is guaranteeing a loan for a stranger.

Hold the garment in pledge to protect yourself from losing your money when he puts up security for an adulteress.

¹⁴If you rise early in the morning and call out a greeting to your neighbor while he is still sleeping, he will consider it to be a curse, not a blessing.

¹⁵A wife who continually argues with her husband is as annoying as

the constant dripping of water on a rainy day;

¹⁶and stopping her from arguing would be as difficult as restraining the wind,

or trying to catch oil in one hand.

¹⁷Iron is used to sharpen an iron blade, just like a man makes his friend better.

¹⁸The farmer who takes care of a fig tree will enjoy its fruit when it is ripe.

This is just like the one who protects his master, he will get honor from his master.

¹⁹When a person looks in the water, he sees his own face;
similarly when we look at what a person loves, we know what he is like deep inside.

²⁰You know that the Place of the Dead and The Destroyer are never satisfied;
and people, too, are never satisfied and always want more.

²¹Silver is refined in a crucible, and gold is put into a furnace to be made pure;
and how a person responds to the praise given to them
will tell you what kind of person he is.

²²Though you grind a fool as if you were grinding up grain,
you will not be able to take his foolishness out of him.

²³A good shepherd will know the condition of all his sheep and he will check on them every day.

²⁴Wealth does not last forever.
Does the crown of a king endure for all generations?

²⁵The grass dies out and then the new growth starts to grow;
and on the mountains food for the cattle is stacked up in the barns.

²⁶The lambs will give you warm clothing and the goats will give you enough to pay for the cost of the field.

²⁷There will be milk from the goats that you can drink—that will be food for everyone who lives in your house—
and it is food to feed your servant girls, as well.

Chapter 28

¹A wicked person runs away even when no one is coming after him,
but the one who does what is right is as brave as lions.

²The more sin there is in a country, the greater the number of rulers it will have;
but when there is a ruler who has understanding and knowledge, the country can last a long time.

³When a poor person oppresses other poor people,
it is like a hard rain that destroys the crops and leaves no food for anyone to eat.

⁴Those who reject the law are the same people who speak well of those who are wicked;
but those who obey the law fight against the wicked.

⁵As difficult as it is for evil people to understand what is just,

even so those who want to find Yahweh understand everything that is important.

⁶It is better to be honest and poor,
than to be dishonest in all you do, and to be rich.

⁷The one who obeys the law is a child who has understanding of the ways of wisdom;
but if children go around with friends who are only interested in eating too much, they put their father to shame.

⁸The person who becomes rich by charging a high rate of interest,
he does not know that he is gathering his money, and it will be given to someone who helps the poor and is kind to them.

⁹If you refuse to hear what the law says to you about how you should live;
then Yahweh is offended by your prayers.

¹⁰If someone tricks an honest person into doing what is bad,
the one who did that will fall into his own trap,
but those who have tried to do what is right will receive many good things.

¹¹A rich person can think of himself as being wise,
but someone who is poor but who has good sense will be able to tell if the rich man is really wise.

¹²When those who do what is right have a victory, it is a time to celebrate,
but when those who are wicked rise up in victory, people run and hide.

¹³The one who tries to cover up his sins will be found out,
but Yahweh will forgive those who tell their sins to him, and they turn away from doing them.

¹⁴How fortunate are those who always honor Yahweh;
but those who refuse to listen to him, who do not want to learn from him, will fall into trouble.

¹⁵You know what a roaring lion or a charging bear is like;
they are just like the wicked ruler who is tearing apart poor people.

¹⁶A king who does not have good sense thinks he is wise when he is cruel and he takes everything away from his people.
but a person who hates getting anything by breaking the law, will live a long life.

¹⁷If a person is guilty of murdering another
he will live like a fugitive until he dies;
and no one will help him.

¹⁸When a person lives his life and is blameless, Yahweh will keep him safe;
but one who lives by his lies will be suddenly ruined.

¹⁹A farmer who works his field will have plenty of food to eat;

but anyone who gives his time to worthless dreams, will be very poor.

²⁰Yahweh will give good things to a faithful person;

but he will certainly punish those who become rich quickly.

²¹It is bad to give a favor to one person and not to another;

some people will do what is wrong just to get a piece of bread.

²²A man who hates to spend his money will run to more,

but he does not know that poverty is coming to him.

²³The one who rebukes a person will later be appreciated more

than the one who says nice things just to flatter him.

²⁴Anyone who steals things from his father or his mother

and says "That is not sinful,"

he is friend of the one who destroys.

²⁵A greedy person stirs up arguments between people;

but the one who trusts in Yahweh will do well.

²⁶One who depends on himself is a fool,

those who make wise decisions escape danger.

²⁷One who gives to help the poor, will not lack anything,

but many curses will come to whoever turns away and ignores them.

²⁸When wicked people get power, men and women hide;

but when the wicked die, there will be more and more of those who do what is right.

Chapter 29

¹When you rebuke a person who has rejected your words and who refused to listen to you,

he will be crushed to the point that he cannot be healed.

²When people live the right way, they become more numerous,

but when a wicked ruler starts to govern, the people groan.

³A son who desires to learn about wisdom makes his father very happy;

but the son who is a companion of prostitutes will lose all his money

⁴When a king rules with honest rules and good laws, he causes his nation to be strong,

but anyone who asks for bribes ruins his nation.

⁵One who praises his neighbor to get something from him,

is like the one who listens for the sound of his footsteps,
so he can catch him in a net.

⁶A bad person sets a trap with his sin; then he falls into it;
but one who does right is full of songs and joy.

⁷The one who does right stands up for the poor and defends them;
but wicked people do not see the importance of standing up for the poor.

⁸People who sneer and mock others are like those who set a city on fire;
but those who help people get rid of their anger are wise.

⁹If a wise person has any conflict with a foolish person,
the foolish person screams at him and then laughs at him, and it never ends.

¹⁰A murderer hates him who does everything right;
and they seek to kill the one who has a good reputation.

¹¹A fool shows all his anger,
but a person who is wise holds his anger, and he knows how to calm himself down.

¹²If a ruler believes the lies that are told to him,
he teaches all his officials to be wicked.

¹³What do a poor person and one who takes advantage of people have in common?
Yahweh gives life to both of them.

¹⁴If a king judges the poor by listening to the truth,
he will build a kingdom that will continue forever.

¹⁵If a child is punished,
the gift of wisdom is given to him;
but when a child is out of control,
this brings shame to his mother.

¹⁶When wicked people have authority, lawbreaking is common;
but those who do what is right will see the day
when the wicked will lose their power.

¹⁷Discipline your child and he will help you and serve you;
you will truly rejoice over him.

¹⁸When no prophet receives any vision from Yahweh, the people go out of control,
but those who obey the law are fortunate.

- ¹⁹Talk to a slave as much as you want,
but though he understands what you are saying, they have learned not to give you an answer.
- ²⁰Do you see someone who is quick to speak, quick to give an opinion?
Yahweh can give a fool more help in the future easier than he can help him who is quick to speak.
- ²¹If a slave is excused from his labor
and treated better than other slaves by his master
from the time he is young;
but when he is grown,
that slave will give trouble to his master.
- ²²A person who cannot control his anger stirs up many quarrels
and uses his rage to rule over others, and so he commits many sins.
- ²³Any person who is proud will be humbled;
but the one who is humbled will be given honor.
- ²⁴A person who helps a thief, hates himself;
he overhears the curse, but he does not say anything about it.
- ²⁵When one is afraid of what people can do,
it is like setting a trap for himself.
but whoever trusts in Yahweh is safe.
- ²⁶Many people want to come before a ruler to get help from him,
but Yahweh is the only one who gives him true justice.
- ²⁷Those who do what is right detest a person who treats others in an unfair way;
just as the wicked hate those who live good lives.

Chapter 30

- ¹These are sayings containing wisdom, the sayings of Agur son of Jakeh.
Agur wrote them for Ithiel, yes, to Ithiel and to Ucal.
- ²I am more like an animal than any human being!
I lack the understanding that a human being has!
- ³I have not learned about wisdom;
I do not know Yahweh, the Holy One.
- ⁴Who has ever gone up to heaven and come back down again?

Who can catch the wind in his hand?

Who can gather up the waters in an overcoat?

Who set the limits to the size of the earth?

What is his name? And what is the name of his son?

Do you know?

⁵Every word of God is proven by a test that it is true;

he is like a shield that protects those who run to him.

⁶Be careful not to add to Yahweh's words more than he has said;

if you do that, he will correct you and he will prove that you lied about what he said.

⁷I ask Yahweh for two things,

and that he give them to me before I die.

⁸Put vain pride and lies far away from me;

and do not give me poverty or riches,

just give me the food I need every day. ⁹For if I have too much money,

it is possible that I will deny my God and say, "Who is Yahweh?"

Or it is possible that I will become so poor that I steal from others

and bring disgrace on the name of my God.

¹⁰Do not speak badly about a slave when he is standing before his master;

if you do, he will curse you, and you will be responsible; you brought it on yourself.

¹¹There are many people who curse their fathers

and they do not praise their mothers or thank them;

¹²those people think everything they do should not be criticized,

but really they have never been cleansed from their filth.

¹³These people show how proud they are in their eyes;

they make people look at them and they show their pride in their faces!

¹⁴These people use their mouths to speak the most hurtful words, like they are cutting and tearing people apart;

it is as if they are eating up the poor people from the earth,

and swallowing up the needy from humanity.

¹⁵There are leeches that suck blood, imagine they had two daughters;

they say, "Give to us! Give to us!

There are four things that are never satisfied—

they always want more:

¹⁶The grave, the place of the dead;
the womb of a woman that never conceived a child;
soil that badly needs to be watered;
and a fire that burns hot and it never says, "The fire is hot enough!"

¹⁷The one who dishonors his father,
and who disrespects and disobeys his mother.
such a person would be killed and have his eyes pecked out by crows,
and would be devoured by the vultures.

¹⁸There are three wonderful things I can mention;
no, there are four that are too amazing and I cannot understand them.

¹⁹How eagles fly in the sky;
how snakes move over a big rock,
how ships can sail on the seas,
and how a man is able to win the love of a woman.

²⁰This is what a woman is like who is not faithful to her husband:
she eats and then wipes her mouth,
and she says, "There is nothing wrong in what I have done."

²¹There are four things that make the earth tremble:

²²the earth trembles with a slave becomes a king;
the earth trembles when fool has eaten his food and is filled;

²³the earth trembles when a woman who is hated by all, gets married,
and the earth trembles, when the maid becomes the wife of her master.

²⁴There are four creatures on the earth that are small, but they are very wise.

²⁵Ants are not strong,
but they store up food during the summer in order to have it during the winter.

²⁶Rock badgers also are not strong,
but they make their homes among the rocks.

²⁷Locusts do not have a king,
but they march in rank like soldiers in the army.

²⁸Lizards are very small and you can hold them in your hand,

but they get inside kings' palaces.

²⁹There are four animals that walk with great pride and they are very impressive as they walk.

³⁰Lions, which are the strongest among wild animals
and are not afraid of any of them.

³¹Strutting roosters, and male goats,
and kings who stand with their soldiers beside them.

³²If you have acted foolishly, exalting yourself,
or if you been planning to do something evil,
put your hand over your mouth! Stop it!

³³Just as when you churn milk, and it produces butter,
even so, if you hit someone hard on his nose, the result is that his nose will bleed;
and, in the same way, when people are angry, they will argue and fight.

Chapter 31

¹These are sayings of King Lemuel—an oracle his mother taught him.

²She says: You are my son; I carried you in my womb;
you are the son, I made promises to Yahweh for you.

³Do not give your strength to women;
and do not tell what your plans are, to the women who destroy kings.

⁴Lemuel, kings should be careful about drinking wine;
and a king should never ask, "Where is the strong drink?"

⁵They could drink but then they might forget that they made a decree of the king,
and tear down the rights of those who have been taken advantage of.

⁶Give strong drink to those who are dying
and to those who are grieving their loss. ⁷One who drinks will forget he is poor,
and he will not remember his trouble.

⁸Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves,
speak for those who are approaching death.

⁹Speak out and render judgment according to what is right;
and plead for justice to come in the cases of the poor and the needy.

¹⁰Who can find a wife who is good at many things?

Her value is much more than the jewels she could wear.

¹¹Her husband completely trusts her,
and because of her, he will never be poor.

¹²She does good things for him and not evil,
all the days of her life.

¹³She finds wool and flax in the market,
and she enjoys spinning it to make yarn and fabric.

¹⁴She is like the merchant ships
because she brings her food to her home from far away.

¹⁵She gets up before dawn to prepare food for her family,
and she gives each servant girl her duties for the day.

¹⁶She goes out and considers what field she will buy, and she buys it.
With the money she has made in other ventures,
she plants a vineyard.

¹⁷She prepares herself with her strength,
and her arms are strong, able to do hard work.

¹⁸She knows when she is getting a good profit from her business.
She keeps a lamp burning all night long.

¹⁹She holds the spindle,
and then she spins the thread that she will use.

²⁰She gives an outstretched hand to help the poor.

²¹She is not worried about the snow,
for everyone in her house have the best winter coats.

²²She makes covers for the beds.
She wears fine purple linen clothes—the color of royalty.

²³Her husband is well known at the city gates,
and there at the gates he sits with the other leaders of the town.

²⁴She makes linen garments and she sells them.
She sells sashes to shop owners.

²⁵She is strong in her character and respected,
and she laughs at what will happen in the future.

²⁶When she speaks, she says what is wise,
and she lives by the law of kindness.

²⁷She watches over everything that is done in her household,
and nothing in her actions would be anything like laziness.

²⁸Her children speak highly of her;
her husband also praises her.

²⁹He says to her, "There are many women who do admirable things,
but you surpass them all!"

³⁰Elegance can deceive
and make you think more highly of a person than you should;
and beauty has no lasting value.

But a woman who honors Yahweh will be praised for the person she is. ³¹Give her what she has earned,
and her works will praise her among the leaders of the town.

Ecclesiastes

Chapter 1

¹These are the words and sayings of the descendant of King David, who is king in Jerusalem. The people call me 'The Teacher.'

²The Teacher says, "Nothing is permanent.

It is all like the morning mist or the wind;

It goes and comes, but for what reason?

³What do people gain from all the work that they do here on the earth?"

⁴Each year old people die and babies are born,
but the earth never changes.

⁵Each morning the sun rises, and each evening it sets,
and then it hurries around to where it started from.

⁶The wind blows south,
and then it turns around to start blowing to the north.
It goes around and around in circles.

⁷All the streams flow into the sea,
but the sea is never full.
The water returns to the sky, and when it rains, the water returns to the rivers,
and it flows again to the sea.

⁸Everything is so unsatisfactory
that we do not even want to talk about it.
We see the same things,
and we become bored with them.
We hear the same things,
but we want to hear something more.

⁹Everything continues to be the same as it has always been.
Things that happen have happened previously, and they will happen again.
What has been done before will be done again.
There is nothing really new in this world.

¹⁰Sometimes people say, "Look at this! This is something new!"

But it has existed previously.

It existed before we were born.

¹¹People do not remember the things that happened long ago,

and in the future, people will not remember what we are doing now.

¹²I, the Teacher, have been the king of Israel for many years, ruling in Jerusalem. ¹³By using my wisdom, I concentrated on understanding everything that was being done on the earth. It is a task that wears me out, just like anyone else who tries it. ¹⁴It seems that nothing that happens on the earth really enables us to do anything useful. It is like trying to control the wind.

¹⁵Many things that are crooked cannot be caused to become straight.

We cannot count things that we cannot see.

¹⁶I said to myself, "I am wiser than any of those who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I am wiser and know more than any of them!" ¹⁷So I determined to learn more about being wise, and also to learn about doing things that are very stupid and foolish. But I found out that trying to understand those things was also useless, like trying to control the wind. ¹⁸Anyone who becomes very wise also becomes very frustrated. The more one knows, the sadder he becomes.

Chapter 2

¹Then I said to myself, "Well, I will try to do everything that I enjoy. I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy." But I found out that doing that was also useless. ²So I said to myself, "It is foolish to laugh all the time, and continually doing what makes me happy does not bring any lasting benefit." ³So, after thinking a lot about it, I decided to cheer myself up by drinking a lot of wine. While I was still trying to be wise, I acted stupidly. I tried to learn what people can do to be happy during the short time that they are alive on the earth. ⁴I did great things. I caused houses to be built for myself and vineyards to be planted. ⁵I made gardens and parks. Then I planted the gardens with many kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I built pools of water to store water to irrigate the fruit trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves. Babies who later became my slaves were born in my palace. I also owned more livestock than any of the previous kings in Jerusalem had owned. ⁸I also accumulated large amounts of silver and gold that were acquired from the treasures of kings and rulers of provinces. I owned men and women who sang for me, and I had many wives and concubines, whom men all over the world would enjoy possessing. ⁹So I gained more power and wealth than any king who had ruled before me in Jerusalem, and I allowed my wisdom to continue to guide me.

¹⁰I got everything that I saw and wanted.

I did everything that I thought would enable me to be happy.

All the things that I enjoyed were like a reward for all my hard work.

¹¹But then I thought about all the hard work that I had done to obtain all those things.

I saw that none of my work brought me any lasting benefit.

It was all like trying to control the wind.

¹²Then I started to think about being wise, and also about being foolish.

I said to myself, "I certainly do not think that anybody will be able to do anything better than I can."

¹³And I thought, "Surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish,

like light is better than darkness,

¹⁴because wise people walk in the daylight and can see where they are going,

but foolish people walk in the darkness and cannot see where they are going."

But I also realized that both wise people and foolish people eventually die.

¹⁵So I said to myself,

"I am very wise, but I will die at the end of my life like foolish people do.

So how has it benefited me to be very wise?

I do not understand why people consider that it is valuable to be wise.

¹⁶Wise people and foolish people all die.

And after we die, we will all eventually be forgotten."

¹⁷So I hated being alive, because all the work that we do here on the earth distressed me. It all seemed to be useless, like trying to control the wind.

¹⁸I also began to hate all the hard work that I had done here on the earth, because when I die, everything that I have acquired will belong to the one who inherits it after me. ¹⁹And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? But even if he is foolish, he will acquire all the things that I worked very hard and wisely to get. ²⁰I thought about all the hard work that I had done in this world. It seemed useless, and I became depressed. ²¹Some people work wisely and skillfully, using the things that they have learned. But when they die, they leave everything, and someone who has not worked for those things acquires them. That fact also seemed to be senseless and caused me to be discouraged. ²²So it is useless for people to work for all they do. ²³Every day the work that they do causes them to experience pain and to be worried. And during the night their minds are not able to rest. That also shows how temporary everything is.

²⁴So I decided that the best thing that we can do is to enjoy what we eat and drink, and also to enjoy our work. And I realized that those things are what God intends for us. ²⁵There is absolutely no one who is able to enjoy those things if God does not give those things to him. ²⁶God enables those who please him to be wise, to know many things, and to enjoy many things. But if sinful people work hard and become rich, God can take their money away from them and give it to those who please him. However, the reason for that is also something that is difficult for me to understand. It seems useless that they worked so hard; it is like trying to control the wind.

Chapter 3

¹There is a right time for everything,

a time for everything that we do in this world.

²There is the right time for any certain person to be born, and there is the right time for him to die.

There is the right time to plant crops, and there is the right time to harvest crops.

³There is the right time to kill people, and there is the right time to heal people.

There is the right time to tear things down, and there is the right time to build things.

⁴There is the right time to cry, and there is the right time to laugh.

There is the right time to mourn, and there is the right time to dance joyfully.

⁵There is the right time to throw away stones from a field, and there is the right time to gather stones to build walls.

There is the right time to embrace people, and there is the right time to keep from embracing them.

⁶There is the right time to search for things, and there is the right time to stop searching for things.

There is the right time to keep things, and there is the right time to throw things away.

⁷There is the right time to tear our clothes because we are grieving, and there is the right time to mend our clothes.

There is the right time to say nothing, and there is the right time for speaking.

⁸There is the right time when we should love things that people do, and there is the right time when we should hate things that people do.

There is the right time for war, and there is the right time for peace.

⁹What do people gain from all the work that they do? ¹⁰I have seen the work that God has given people to do.

¹¹God has fixed a time that is right for everything to happen. He has also caused people to realize that there are things that will last forever. But in spite of that, no one can completely understand everything that God has done, from the time that he starts doing things until he finishes them. ¹²I know that the best thing for us people to do is to rejoice and to do good things during the time that we are alive. ¹³And I also know that everyone should enjoy what they eat and drink, and enjoy the work that they do. Those are gifts that God gives to us. ¹⁴I also know that what God does endures forever. No one can add to what God does, and no one can take away from the things that he does. God does those things in order that people will honor him.

¹⁵Things that exist now have already existed previously,

and things that will happen in the future have already happened previously;

God causes us to want to understand mysteries.

¹⁶Furthermore, I saw that on this earth, even in the courts where we expect judges to make right decisions about what people had done, they did many wicked things.

¹⁷So I said to myself, "God will judge both righteous people and wicked people. There is certainly a time for him to do that because there is a time for him to do everything."

¹⁸And regarding humans, I also said to myself, "God is testing us, to show us that in one way people are no different than animals." ¹⁹What happens to people happens to animals. Animals die, and people die. We all must breathe to remain alive. People have no advantage over animals in that way. Everything disappears so quickly.

²⁰People and animals all die and are buried. We are all made of soil, and when we die, our corpses become soil again. ²¹No one knows for sure that when we die, our souls go up to heaven and the souls of animals go down to the place where the dead are."

²²So I think that the best thing for us people to do is to be happy about the work that we do, because that is what God has given to us. I say this because no one of us knows what happens to us after we die.

Chapter 4

¹I thought some more about all the suffering that people are made to experience on the earth.

I thought about the tears of people who were oppressed

and who had no one to comfort them.

Those who oppress them have power,

and there is no one able to comfort the oppressed.

²So I thought that those who are already dead are more fortunate

than those who are still alive.

³And those who have not yet been born

are even more fortunate than those two kinds of people,

because those who have not been born have not seen all the evil things that are done on the earth.

⁴I also thought about all the hard work that people do and the things they are able to accomplish. And I thought about how someone who works hard sometimes makes his neighbor jealous. I decided that this also is something that is not accomplishing anything useful. It is like trying to control the wind.

⁵Foolish people refuse to work.

They sit idly with their hands folded and do not work.

So they ruin themselves.

⁶So some say, "It is better to be content with working quietly for a little bit of money,

than to work anxiously and try to get a lot of money,

which is as useless as trying to control the wind."

⁷I thought about something else that happens on the earth that seems useless.

⁸There are people who live alone;

they do not have a family nor even children or any brothers or sisters living with them.

Every day they work very hard without stopping; they make a lot of money,

but they are never satisfied with the things that they get.

They ask themselves,

"Why am I working so hard; whom am I actually helping?

Why am I not doing things that I would enjoy doing?

What I have been doing seems useless." This is very bad.

⁹Having someone work with you is better than being by yourself all the time.

If you have a friend, he can help you to do your work.

¹⁰If you fall down, he can help you get up again.

But if you fall down when you are alone, you will have trouble,
because there is no one to help you stand up.

¹¹Similarly, if two people lie down together,
they can help each other to remain warm.

But someone who sleeps alone will certainly not be warm.

¹²Someone who is alone can easily be attacked and defeated by another person,
but two people can help each other and resist someone who attacks them.

Three people can defend themselves even more easily,
like a rope that is made from three cords is harder to break than a rope made from two cords.

¹³A young man who is poor but wise is a better person than a foolish old king who refuses to pay attention when people try to give him good advice. ¹⁴It is possible for a young man like that to succeed and some day become king, even if his parents were poor or even if he was in prison in the past. ¹⁵But then some other young man becomes king, and everyone starts to support him. ¹⁶Large crowds of people crowd around him. But after a few years, they will be tired of him, too. So it is all senseless, like trying to control the wind.

Chapter 5

¹Be careful when you approach God in his house. Listen well to him. That is better than offering sacrifices to him and then not obeying him, which is foolish.

²Do not speak too quickly without thinking about the words you say;
and do not be too quick in your heart to complain about something to God.

Do not forget that God is in heaven and he is all-powerful
and you are here on the earth,
so think carefully before you make any promises to God.

³If you are continually thinking and worrying about things,
you will have bad dreams about them and not rest well.

And the more you talk,
the more likely it will be that you will say things that are foolish.

⁴When you solemnly promise God that you will do something, do not foolishly delay in doing it, because God is not pleased with foolish people. Do all the things that you promise God that you will do. ⁵It is better to not promise anything than to promise to do something and then not do it. ⁶Do not let the things that you promise to do cause you to sin by not doing them. And if you promise God that you will do something but then do not do it, do not say to God's priest that it was a mistake for you to promise to do that. If you do that, God can destroy everything you have worked to accomplish. ⁷Promising to do something and not doing it is like having a useless dream. Instead, honor God by doing what you promised him that you would do.

⁸Do not be surprised if you see poor people being oppressed. There are people able to stop others from oppressing them, but even these people are under the power of someone even higher. ⁹Even though people throughout the land own their fields, the king forces them to give him some of the crops that they harvest.

¹⁰Everyone who tries to get as much money as they can
will never think that they have enough.
They will never be satisfied with the money that they have.
That fact also makes no sense.

¹¹The more money that people have,
the more they want to spend it.
People who have a lot of money do not benefit from it,
except to look at it and admire it.

¹²Those who work hard sleep peacefully at night,
even if they do not have much food to eat.
But rich people do not sleep well
because they worry about their money.

¹³I have seen another terrible thing that happens here on the earth.
People save up all their money and become rich,
but they are miserable because they store up their money.

¹⁴If something happens that causes their money to be gone,
then when they die,
there is no money for their children.

¹⁵When we are born,
we do not bring anything with us,
and when we die,
we take nothing with us
from all that we have earned by working hard.

¹⁶That also seems to make no sense.
People bring nothing into the world when they are born,
and when they leave this world they take nothing with them.
They have worked hard,
but they receive no lasting benefit.

¹⁷Furthermore, rich people are always miserable, sad,

and depressed.

¹⁸So the best thing for people to do here on the earth during the few years that God allows them to be alive is to eat, drink, and enjoy their work, because those are the things that he allows them to do. ¹⁹If people are rich and have a lot of possessions, and are able to enjoy the things that they have and to enjoy their work, those things are also gifts from God. ²⁰Those people do not think much about everything that has happened during their lifetime, because God makes sure that they keep working at what they enjoy.

Chapter 6

¹I have seen something else here on this earth that troubles people. ²God enables some people to receive a lot of money and possessions and to be honored by him. They have everything that they want. But God sometimes does not allow them to enjoy those things. Someone else gets them and enjoys them. That seems senseless and unfair.

³Someone might have a hundred children and live for many years. But if he is not able to enjoy the things that he has acquired, and if he is not buried properly after he dies, I say that a child that is dead when it is born is more fortunate. ⁴This is true, even though that dead baby's birth is meaningless—even though it does not have a name, and its brief life becomes only a sad memory in the future. ⁵That baby does not live to see the sun or know anything. But even so, it finds more rest than rich people do who are alive. ⁶Even if people should live for two thousand years, if they do not enjoy the things that God gives to them, it would have been better for them never to have been born.

All people who live a long time certainly all go to the same place—to the grave.

⁷People work hard to earn enough money to buy food to eat,
but often they never get enough to eat.

⁸So it seems that wise people do not receive more lasting benefits
than foolish people do.

And it seems that poor people do not benefit from knowing how to conduct their lives.

⁹It is better to enjoy the things that we already have
than to constantly want more things.

Continually wanting more things is senseless,
like trying to control the wind.

¹⁰All the things that exist on the earth have been given names.

Everyone knows what people are like,
so it is useless to argue with God,
who is stronger than we are.

¹¹The more that we talk,
the more often we say things that are senseless,
so it certainly does not benefit us to talk a lot.

¹²No human being can know everything that is good for himself in this life. People live for a few seemingly meaningless days. Life passes by quickly, like a shadow, and no one knows what is coming after we die.

Chapter 7

¹It is better that other people honor us than to have fine perfume.

The day that we die is better than the day that we are born.

²It is better to go to a house where people are mourning about someone who has died

than to go to a house where people are feasting,

because everyone will die some day,

and people should think about when they will die.

³It is better to be sad than to be always laughing,

because when we are sad, we can think better about the things that will make us wise and happy.

⁴Wise people who go to where others are mourning think about the fact that some day they also will die,

but foolish people do not think about that; they are always laughing.

⁵It is better to pay attention to someone who is rebuking you

than to listen to the songs of a foolish person.

⁶By listening to foolish people laughing

we will not learn anymore than by listening to the crackling of thorns being burned under a pot.

Listening to fools is senseless.

⁷When wise people say to others, "You must pay me a lot of money for me to protect you,"

that causes those wise people to become foolish.

Those who accept bribes become unable to do what is right.

⁸Finishing something is better than starting something,

and being patient is better than being proud.

⁹Do not quickly lose your temper,

because it is foolish people who become very angry.

¹⁰Do not say, "Things were a lot better previously,"

because it is only foolish people who say that.

¹¹Being wise is like inheriting valuable things.

There are lasting benefits for anyone on earth who is wise.

¹²We are sometimes protected by being wise,

as we are sometimes protected by having a lot of money.
However, being wise is better than having a lot of money,
because being wise prevents us from doing foolish things that would cause us to die.

¹³Think carefully about what God has done.

Certainly no one can cause to become straight
the things that God has caused to be crooked.

¹⁴When things are going well for you, be happy,
and when things are not going well for you,
remember that God is the one who causes good things to happen
and who also causes disasters.

Yet God does not reveal to anyone exactly what his future holds.

¹⁵During all the time that I have been alive I have seen many things that seem senseless.

I have seen righteous people die while they were still young,
and I have seen wicked people remain alive for a very long time
in spite of their continuing to be wicked.

¹⁶So do not think that you are very righteous,
and do not think that you are very wise,
because if you think those things, you will destroy yourself.

¹⁷If you do what is evil or do what is foolish,
you might die while you are still young.

¹⁸Continue to try to become wise and do what is right.
The person who always respects God will show this by his behavior.

¹⁹If you are wise, you will be more powerful
than the ten most powerful men in your city.

²⁰There is no one in this world who always does what is right,
who never sins.

²¹Do not pay attention to everything that people say,
because if you do that, you might hear your servant curse you.

²²After all, you yourself know very well that you have also cursed other people.

²³I said to myself that I would use my wisdom to study all the things that I have written about,
but I was not able to do it.

²⁴Wisdom seems to be far from me.

There is no one who can truly understand everything.

²⁵But I decided to investigate things and

by my wisdom try to understand the reason for everything.

I also wanted to understand why people act wickedly
and why they act very foolishly.

²⁶One thing I learned was that allowing a woman to seduce you is worse than dying.

A woman who tries to seduce men is as dangerous as a trap.

If you allow her to put her arms around you, it will be as though she is fastening you with chains.

Women like that will capture sinful men,
but men who please God will escape from such women.

²⁷This is what I have learned. I tried to learn more and more about things to try to find out the reason for everything, ²⁸and I continued to try to learn more, but I could not find all that I was searching for. But one thing that I found out was that among one thousand people I found one righteous man, but I did not find even one righteous woman. ²⁹I have learned only this: That when God created people, they were righteous, but they have found many ways to complicate their own lives.

Chapter 8

¹I will tell you about those who are truly wise,
with the result that they can explain why everything happens.

Being wise enables people to be happy
and enables them to smile.

²You solemnly promised God that you would obey what the king commands, so do that. ³Do not do anything rashly when it concerns the king. And do not join with those who want to rebel against him, because the king will do what he wants to do. ⁴We need to obey what the king says more than we need to obey what anyone else says, for no one can say to the king, "Why are you doing that?"

⁵If you obey what the king commands,
he will not harm you.

So be wise, and know the correct time to do things and the right way to do them.

⁶Although people experience many troubles,
there is a right way to do them and a right time to do them.

⁷No one knows what will happen in the future,
so there is no one who can tell him what is going to happen.

⁸We cannot control our breathing,

and we cannot control when we will stop breathing and die.

Soldiers are not permitted to go home during a battle,

and evil people will not be saved by doing what is evil.

⁹I thought about all those things, and I thought about all the other things that happen on this earth. I saw that sometimes people are able to do severe harm to others. ¹⁰I also saw that sometimes after evil people die, they are highly honored at their funerals by the people in the cities where they had done evil deeds. It was difficult to understand why that happens.

¹¹If evil people are not immediately punished, it causes other people to also want to do evil things. ¹²But even if sinful people commit a hundred crimes, and even if they live for a long time, I know that things will go better for those who honor and revere God. ¹³I also know that things will not go well for those who are evil, because they do not honor God. Shadows do not last a long time. Similarly, evil people will not live a long time.

¹⁴Another thing that sometimes happens on this earth is that bad things happen to righteous people, and good things happen to evil people. It is difficult to understand why that happens. ¹⁵So I decided that I would recommend that people be happy while they are alive, because the best thing that people can do here on this earth is to eat and drink and be happy. Enjoying those things will help people while they do their work, all the days that God has given to them to remain alive here on the earth.

¹⁶I thought about being wise and about people who work very hard on this earth, working day and night and not taking time to sleep. ¹⁷Then I thought about everything that God has done, and I realized that no one can understand everything that happens here on this earth. Truly, people are not able to fully understand everything that God does, even if they try hard to do that. Even if wise people claim that they understand it all, they cannot.

Chapter 9

¹I thought about all those things, and I decided that God controls what happens to everyone, even those who are wise and those who are righteous. No one knows whether others will love them or whether they will hate them.

²But we know that some time in the future we will all die.

It does not matter whether we act righteously or wickedly,

whether we are good or whether we are bad,

whether we are acceptable for worshiping God

or whether we have done things to cause us to be unacceptable.

It does not matter if we offer sacrifices to God or if we do not.

It does not matter if we do what we have promised God that we will do or if we do not.

We all die.

The same thing will happen to good people and to sinful people,

to those who solemnly promise to do things for God and to those who are afraid to make such promises.

³It seems wrong that the same thing happens to everyone on this earth. Everyone dies. Furthermore, people's inner beings are full of evil. People do foolish things while they are alive, and then they join those who are dead.

⁴While we are alive, we can expect that good things will happen to us. We despise dogs, but it is better to be a dog that is alive than to be a majestic lion that is dead.

⁵We who are alive know that some day we will die,
but dead people do not know anything.

Dead people do not receive any more rewards,
and people soon forget them.

⁶While they were alive, they loved people, they hated people, they envied people,
but they stop doing any of that when they die.

They will never again be a part of anything that happens here on the earth.

⁷So I say, be joyful while you eat your food and drink your wine, because that is what God wants you to do. ⁸Wear nice clothes and cause your face to have a good appearance. ⁹Enjoy living with your wife whom you love, all during the time that God has given to you to be alive here on this earth. Even though it is difficult to understand why many things happen, this life with your wife is your reward for doing the work that you do here on this earth.

¹⁰Whatever you are able to do, do it with all your energy, because at some point you will die, and in the place of the dead where you are going, no one works or plans to do anything or knows anything or has any wisdom.

¹¹I have seen something else here on the earth:

The person who runs fastest does not always win the race,
the strongest soldiers do not always win the battle,
the wisest people do not always have food,
the smartest people do not always become rich,
and the people who have studied a lot are not always honored by others.
We cannot always control what things will happen to us and where they will happen.

¹²No one knows when he will die.

Fish are cruelly caught in a net,
and birds are caught in snares.

Similarly, people experience disasters
at times when they do not expect them to happen.

¹³Once I saw here on this earth something that a wise man did that impressed me. ¹⁴There was a small town, where only a few people lived. The army of a great king came to that town and surrounded it. They built dirt ramps up against the walls in order to climb up and attack the town. ¹⁵In that town there was someone who was poor but very wise. Because of what that person suggested, the town was saved, but people soon forgot about him. ¹⁶So I realized that although being wise is better than being strong, if you are poor, no one will appreciate what you do, and people will soon forget what you said.

¹⁷A wise man who speaks quietly—people hear him better
than they hear a king who is shouting to a foolish crowd.

¹⁸Being wise is more useful
than having a lot of weapons;

however, if a person does just one foolish thing,
he might ruin many good things that others have done.

Chapter 10

¹A few dead flies in a bottle of perfume cause all the perfume to stink.

Similarly, a small amount of acting foolishly can have a greater effect than acting wisely.

²If people think sensibly, it will lead them to do what is right;
if they think foolishly, it causes them to do what is wrong.

³Even while foolish people walk along the road,
they show that they do not have good sense.
They show everyone that they are not wise.

⁴Do not quit your job when a ruler is angry with you.
If you remain calm, he will probably stop being angry.

⁵There is something else that I have seen here on this earth,
something that rulers sometimes do that is wrong:

⁶they appoint foolish people to have important positions,
while they appoint rich people to have unimportant positions.

⁷They allow slaves to ride on horses like rich people usually do,
but they force officials to walk like slaves usually do.

⁸It is possible that those who dig pits
will fall into one of those pits.
It is possible that someone who tears down a wall
will be bitten by a snake that is in that wall.

⁹If you work in a quarry,
it is possible that a stone will fall on you and injure you.
It is possible that men who split logs
will be injured by one of those logs.

¹⁰If your axe is not sharp,
you will need to work harder to cut down a tree,
but by using wisdom, you will succeed.

¹¹If a snake bites a man before he charms it,

his ability to charm snakes will not benefit him.

¹²Wise people say what is sensible, and because of that, people honor them,
but foolish people are destroyed by what they themselves say.

¹³When foolish people start to talk, they say foolish things,
and they end by saying things that are both wicked and foolish.

¹⁴They talk too much.

None of us knows what will happen in the future,
or what will happen after we die.

¹⁵Foolish people become very exhausted by the work that they do,
with the result that they are even unable to find the road to their town.

¹⁶Terrible things will happen to the people of a nation whose ruler is a foolish young person,
whose leaders continually eat, all during the day, every day.

¹⁷But how fortunate is a nation if its ruler comes from a noble family,
if its leaders feast only at the proper times,
and if they eat and drink only to be strong, not to become drunk.

¹⁸Some men are very lazy and do not repair the beams of their roof,
with the result that the roof sags and collapses.

If they do not repair the roof,
water will leak into the house when it rains.

¹⁹Eating food and drinking wine makes us laugh and be happy.
If you have enough money, you can buy everything you need.

²⁰Do not even think about cursing the king,
or about cursing rich people, even when you are alone in your bedroom.
It is always possible that a little bird will hear what you are saying
and tell those people what you said about them.

Chapter 11

¹Give generously to others some of the money that you have;
if you do that, later you will get back an equal amount.

²Share some of what you have with seven or eight others,
because you do not know when you will experience a disaster and will need their help.

³It is true that when clouds are full of water,
they pour rain on the earth.

Similarly, wherever a tree falls on the ground,
that is where it will remain.

⁴If farmers see in what direction the wind is blowing,
they will know whether it is wise at that time to plant things or not.

It is also true that if farmers look at the clouds and see that they are blowing from the west and will bring rain,
they will not try to harvest their crops on that day.

⁵We do not know where the wind comes from or where it goes,
and we do not know how bodies are formed in a woman's womb.
Similarly, God is the one who makes everything,
and we cannot fully understand what he does.

⁶Start planting your seeds in the morning,
and do not stop planting them until the evening,
because you do not know which ones will grow better,
the ones you plant in the morning or the ones you plant later in the day,
or whether both will grow well.

⁷It is very delightful to be alive
and see the sun rise every morning.

⁸Even if people live for many years,
they should enjoy all of them.

But they should not forget that some day they will die
and then they will never be able to see any light again,
and they do not know what will happen to them after they die.

⁹You young people, be happy while you are still young.
Enjoy doing the things that you want to do.
But do not forget that God will judge you one day
concerning all the things that you do.

¹⁰So when you are young, do not worry about anything,
and do not pay attention to the pains that you have in your body,
because we will not remain young and strong forever.

Chapter 12

¹While you are still young, keep thinking about God, who created you.

Do that before you are old and you experience many troubles,

during the years when you say,

"I no longer enjoy being alive."

²When you become old, the light from the sun and moon and stars will seem dim to you,

and it will seem that the rain clouds always return quickly after it rains.

³Then your arms that you use to protect yourself,

and your legs that support your body will become weak.

Many of the teeth that you use to grind your food will fall out,

and your eyes that you use to look out of windows will not see clearly.

⁴Your ears will no longer hear the noise in the streets,

and you will no longer be able to hear clearly the sound of people grinding grain with millstones.

You will be awakened in the morning by hearing the birds singing,

but you will not be able to hear well the songs that the birds sing.

⁵You will be afraid to be in high places

and afraid of dangers on the roads that you walk on.

Your hair will become white like the flowers of almond trees.

When you try to walk, you will drag yourself along like grasshoppers,

and you will no longer desire a woman at all.

Then you will die and go to your eternal home,

and the people who will mourn for you will be in the streets.

⁶Think much about God now, because soon our lives will end,

like silver chains or golden bowls that break easily,

or like pitchers that are broken at the water fountain,

or like broken pulleys at a well.

⁷Then our corpses will decay and become dirt again,

and our spirits will return to God, the one who gave us our spirits.

⁸So I, the Teacher, say again that everything is temporary and useless.

⁹I, the Teacher, was considered to be a very wise man, and I taught the people many things. I assembled and wrote down many proverbs, and I carefully thought about them and put them in order. ¹⁰I searched for words that would be pleasing to hear, and what I have written is reliable and true.

¹¹The things that I and other wise people say give directions, and they are like nails that fix things together and last a long time. When people follow clear and understandable directions, they know what is right, and, so then they can do it. The sayings of the wise are like our shepherd who guides us where we need to go. ¹²So, my son, pay careful attention to what I have written, and choose carefully what you read that others have written. This work of writing many books is endless. Trying to study them all will be an endless task.

¹³Now you have heard all that I have told you,

and here is the conclusion:

Revere God, and obey his commandments,

because those commandments summarize everything that people should do.

¹⁴And do not forget that God will judge everything that we do,

good things and bad things,

even things that we do secretly.

Song of Songs

Chapter 1

¹This is King Solomon's most beautiful song.

The young woman speaking to herself

²I wish he would kiss me on my lips,

The woman speaks to her lover

because your love for me is more delightful than wine.

³The fragrance of the perfume on your skin is very sweet.

And your honor is very great and is spreading,

like the fragrance of the special oil that you have put on your skin.

That is why the other young women are attracted to you.

⁴Take me quickly;

take me to your home.

The woman speaking to herself

He is like a king to me;

he has brought me into his bedroom.

The woman speaking to her lover

I am very happy about you;

my love for you is better than wine.

It is not surprising that the other young women adore you.

The woman speaking to the other women

⁵You women of Jerusalem,

I am dark but beautiful;

my dark skin is like the tents in Kedar,

or like the beautiful curtains in Solomon's palace.

⁶But do not stare at me because the sun has made my skin dark.

my brothers were angry with me,

so they forced me to work out in the sunshine in the vineyards,

so I was not able to take good care of my body.

The woman speaking to her lover

⁷You whom I love, where will you take your flock of sheep today?

Where will you allow them to rest at noontime?

I want to know because it is not right for me to wander around like a prostitute
looking for you among the flocks that belong to your friends.

Her lover answering her

⁸You who are the most beautiful of all the women,
if you search for me and do not know where I will take my sheep,
follow the tracks of the sheep.

Then allow your young goats to graze near the shepherds' tents.

⁹You are beautiful, my darling, like one of the young female horses
that pull the chariots belonging to the king of Egypt.

¹⁰Your earrings are decorations for your cheeks,
and there are strings of beads around your neck.

¹¹I will make for you some gold earrings
that are decorated with silver.

The woman speaking to herself

¹²While the king was on his couch,
the smell of my perfume spread around the room.

¹³The man who loves me stays between my breasts during the night like a bag of perfume tied around my neck.

¹⁴He is like a bunch of flowers from the vineyards at En Gedi.

Her lover speaking to her

¹⁵You whom I love, you are beautiful;
you are very beautiful!

Your eyes are as delightful as doves.

The woman speaking to her lover

¹⁶You who love me, you are very delightful,
you are wonderful!

This green grass in the countryside will be like a couch where we can lie down.

¹⁷Branches of cedar trees will shade us;
the fir branches overhead are like a roof for us.

Chapter 2

The woman speaking to her lover

¹I am like an insignificant flower in the plains,
like an insignificant lily growing in a valley.

The man speaking to her

²Among all the other young women,
you, the one whom I love, are like a lily growing among thorns!

The woman speaking to herself

³Among all the other men, this man is the one who loves me; he is like a tree that grows in the forest.
Under his shade I am safe from the sun.
When he is close to me, it is like eating sweet fruit.

⁴He led me to the room where I feasted on his love,
where he made love to me as if he were covering me with his love.

The woman speaking to her lover

⁵Refresh me and strengthen me with your lovemaking.
It is like eating raisins and other fruit,
because I want you to love me even more.

The woman speaking to herself

⁶I hope he puts his left arm under my head
and holds me close with his right arm.

The woman speaking to the other women

⁷You young women of Jerusalem,
I want you to take an oath, while the does and gazelles are listening, that you will not
cause us to desire love
until the right time comes.

The woman speaking to herself

⁸I hear the voice of the man who loves me.
It is as though he is leaping over the mountains
and skipping over the hills

⁹like a deer or a gazelle.

Now he is standing outside the wall of our house,

looking in the window,
and peering through the lattice.

¹⁰He spoke to me and said,
“You whom I love, get up;
my beautiful one, come with me!

¹¹Look, the winter has ended;
the rain has stopped.

¹²The flowers are blooming throughout the country.
It is now time to sing;
we hear the pigeons cooing.

¹³There are young figs on the fig trees,
and there are blossoms on the grapevines
and their fragrance fills the air.
You whom I love, get up;
my beautiful one, come with me!

¹⁴You are like a dove hiding in the rocky cliff.
Show me your face,
and allow me to hear your voice,
because your voice sounds sweet,
and your face is lovely.”

The woman speaking to the man

¹⁵There are other men who ruin women as wild dogs ruin vineyards;
do not allow those men to attack me.

¹⁶This man whom I love—I belong to him, and he belongs to me.
He takes great pleasure in kissing my lips,
as sheep love to graze in pastures.

The woman speaking to her lover

¹⁷You whom I love, you must go away before dawn, when the darkness disappears.
Go away quickly, like a gazelle or like a young deer running on the high hills.

Chapter 3

The woman speaking to herself

¹During the entire night while I lay on my bed,
I was longing to see the one I love with all my heart.
I wanted him to come,
but he did not.

²So I said to myself,
"I will get up now and walk around the city,
through the streets and plazas,
to search for the one whom I love with all my heart."
So I got up and went out to look for him,
but I could not find him.

³The city watchmen saw me
while they were patrolling in the city.
I asked them,
"Have you seen the one whom I love with all my heart?"

⁴As soon as I walked past them,
I found the one whom I love with all my heart.
I clung to him and would not let him go
until I brought him to my mother's house,
to the room where my mother had conceived me.

The woman speaking to the other women

⁵You women of Jerusalem,
solemnly promise me, while the doves and gazelles are listening, that you will not
disturb us while we are making love
until we are ready to stop.

The young woman speaking to herself

⁶What is that I see coming from the wilderness,
something that is stirring up dust like a column of smoke
like smoke from burning myrrh and incense
made from spices imported by merchants?

⁷It is Solomon's litter carried by servants and
surrounded by sixty bodyguards
chosen from the strongest soldiers in Israel.

⁸They all have swords
and they all are trained to use them.
Each one has his sword strapped to his side
and is prepared for dangers that can happen during the night or day.

⁹King Solomon commanded his servants to make that litter for him;
it was made with wood from Lebanon.

¹⁰The canopy that covered it was held up by silver posts,
and the back of the litter was embroidered with gold.
The seat was covered with purple cloth
lovingly made by the women of Jerusalem.

¹¹You women of Jerusalem,
come and look at King Solomon
wearing the headdress that his mother put on his head
on the day when he was married,
the happiest day of his life.

Chapter 4

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹My darling, you are beautiful,
you are very beautiful!
Underneath your veil, your eyes are as gentle as doves.
Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats
moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

²Your teeth are very white,
as white as sheep whose wool people have just cut,
as white as sheep that people have just washed in a stream.
You have all of your teeth on both sides;
none of them is missing.

³Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon,
and your mouth is lovely.
Beneath your veil,
your cheeks are round and rosy like the halves of a pomegranate.

⁴Your long neck is beautiful, like the tower of King David
that was built using layers of stone.
The ornaments on the necklaces around your neck are like a thousand shields hanging on the walls of a tower;
each one belongs to a warrior.

⁵Your breasts are as delicate as two young twin deer
eating grass among lilies.

⁶Until dawn tomorrow morning,
when the nighttime shadows disappear,
I will lie close to your breasts,
because they are like two hills that smell like sweet spices.

⁷My darling, you are completely beautiful;
your body is perfectly formed!

⁸My darling, it is as though you were in Lebanon
far away, where I cannot reach you.
Come back to me.

It is as though you were on the top of Mount Hermon
or the nearby peaks, where I cannot go to you.
Come from the mountains, where the lions have their dens
and where the leopards live on the mountains.

⁹You who are most dear to me, when I see you,
you force me to love you
when I see you look at me, when I see a little of the jewelry that you wear around your neck.

¹⁰My bride, your love for me is delightful!
It more delightful than wine!
The fragrance of your perfume
is more pleasing than any spice!

¹¹When you kiss me, it is better than when I eat honey.

Your kisses are as sweet as milk mixed with honey.

The aroma of your clothes

is like the aroma of cedar trees in Lebanon.

¹²You who are most dear to me, you are like a garden that the owner keeps locked

in order that other men cannot enter it;

you are like a spring that is covered

in order that others may not drink from it.

¹³You are like an orchard of pomegranate trees

full of delicious fruit,

and plenty of plants that produce henna and nard spices,

¹⁴saffron and calamus and cinnamon

and many other kinds of incense,

myrrh and aloes

and many other fine spices.

¹⁵You are like a fountain in a garden,

like a spring of clear water

that flows down from the mountains of Lebanon.

The young woman speaking to her lover

¹⁶I want the north wind and the south wind to come,

and blow on my garden,

in order that the fragrance of the spices will spread through the air.

Similarly, I want the one who loves me to come and enjoy being close to me

like someone comes into a garden and enjoys eating the fruit that grows there.

Chapter 5

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹You who are most dear to me,

I have come to be next to you.

It will be as though I am gathering myrrh with my other spices,

eating my honey and honeycomb,

and drinking my wine and my milk.

The woman's lover speaking to her

Friends, enjoy making love;

fully enjoy all that you do with each other.

The young woman speaking to herself

²I was asleep, and I had a dream.

In it I heard my lover knocking at the door.

He said, "You who are dearer to me than my sister, my darling, my dear friend, my perfect one, my dove,
open the door for me!

My hair is wet from the dew,

from the mist that has fallen during the night."

³But I had already taken off my robe;

I did not want to put it on again to open the door.

I had already washed my feet;

I did not want them to get dirty again.

⁴The one who loves me put his hand through the opening in the door,
and I was thrilled in my inner being that he was there.

⁵I got up to open the door for him,
but first I put a lot of myrrh on my hands.

It was dripping from my fingers
while I unlatched the bolt.

⁶I opened the door for the man who loves me,
but he left.

He had turned away and was gone!

I was very disappointed.

I searched for him, but I could not find him;

I called him, but he did not answer.

⁷The city watchmen saw me while they were walking around the city.
They beat me and wounded me
because they thought I was a prostitute;
those men who were guarding the city walls took my robe.

The young woman speaking to the women of the city

⁸You young women of Jerusalem,
I want you to take an oath
that if you see the man who loves me,
you will tell him that I want him so much that I feel sick.

The women of the city speaking to the young woman

⁹You who are the fairest among women,
why do you think that the one who loves you is better than other men?
In what way is he better than other men?
Why do you want us to swear that we will tell him that?

The young woman speaking to the women of the city

¹⁰It is because the man who loves me is handsome and healthy,
outstanding among other men.

¹¹His head is beautiful, like purest gold;
his hair is wavy
and as black as a raven.

¹²His eyes as gentle as doves
along the streams;
the white parts of his eyes are as white as milk,
with what resembles jewels inlaid in them.

¹³His cheeks are like a garden full of spice trees
that produce sweet-smelling perfume.
His lips are like lilies
that have myrrh dripping from them.

¹⁴His arms are like gold rods that have rounded ends,
and that are decorated with precious stones.
His body is like ivory
that is decorated with sapphires.

¹⁵His legs are like marble columns
that are set in bases made of pure gold.
He is majestic, like the mountains of Lebanon,
like delightful cedar trees.

¹⁶His kisses are very sweet;
he is completely attractive.
You young women of Jerusalem,
this is why the man who loves me is better than all other men.

Chapter 6

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the young woman

¹You who are the most beautiful of the women,
where has the one who loves you gone?
If you tell us which direction he went,
we will go with you to search for him.

The young woman speaking to herself

²The one who loves me has come to me, I, who am like his garden,
He has come to enjoy my charms,
to enjoy cuddling embracing me
and kissing my lips, which are like lilies.

³I belong to the one who loves me, and the one who loves me belongs to me.
He has pleasure in kissing my lips,
like sheep enjoy grazing.

The woman's lover speaking to her

⁴My darling, you are beautiful,
as Tirzah the capital city of Israel and Jerusalem the capital city of Judah are beautiful;
you make me tremble, just as if I had seen a great army approach.

⁵Stop looking at me like that,
because your eyes excite me very much.
Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats
moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

⁶Your teeth are very white
like a flock of sheep whose wool has just been shorn
and have come up from being washed in a stream.
You have all of your teeth on both sides;

none of them is missing.

⁷Beneath your veil,

your cheeks are like the halves of a pomegranate.

The woman's lover speaking to himself

⁸Even if a king had 60 queens and 80 concubines

and more young women than anyone can count,

⁹none of them would be like my dove, who is perfect,

you who are your mother's only daughter,

whom your mother considers to be very precious.

Other young women who see you say that you are fortunate,

and the queens and concubines recognize that you are very beautiful.

What the queens and the concubines said

¹⁰Who is this who looks like the dawn,

who is as beautiful to look at as the moon,

who is an endless mystery?

The woman's lover speaking to himself

¹¹I went down to some walnut trees

to look at the new plants that were growing in the valley.

I wanted to see if the grapevines had budded

and if the pomegranate trees were blooming.

¹²I was as happy as if

I were riding in a chariot belonging to a prince.

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹³You who are the perfect one,

come back to us, in order that I may see you!

The young woman speaking to her lover

Why do you want to look at me, the one who is perfect,

dancing between two rows of dancers?

Chapter 7

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹You, the daughter of a prince,
have lovely feet in your sandals.
Your curved hips are like jewels
that have been made by a skilled craftsman.

²Your navel is like a round bowl
that I hope will always be full of wine mixed with spices.
Your waist is like a pile of wheat
with lilies growing around it.

³Your breasts are as delicate as two young twin deer.

⁴Your neck is like a tower made of ivory.
Your eyes sparkle like the pools in the city of Heshbon,
near the Bath Rabbim Gate.
Your nose is long, like the tower in Lebanon
that faces Damascus.

⁵Your head is majestic like Mount Carmel.
Your long hair is shiny and black;
it is as though I, your king, am captured by your tresses.

⁶My love, you are so beautiful and lovely
with all your delights.

⁷You are stately like a palm tree,
and your breasts are like grape clusters.

⁸I said to myself, "I will climb that palm tree
and take hold of those clusters of dates."
I want your breasts to be also like clusters of grapes that I can feel;
I want your breath to be like the sweet fragrance of apricots.

⁹I want your kisses to be like very good wine.
When I kiss you, the woman who loves me,
I want it to be as if it was wine flowing over our mouths and teeth.
The young woman speaking to her lover

¹⁰I belong to the man who loves me,
and he desires me.

¹¹You who love me, let us go to the countryside,
and sleep in a village somewhere.

¹²And let us go early to the vineyards
to see if the grapevines have budded
and if there are blossoms on them that have opened,
and see if the pomegranate trees are blooming,
and there I will allow you to make love to me.

¹³The mandrake plants are producing a fragrant odor,
and we are surrounded by delightful pleasures,
new ones and old ones,
pleasures that I have been saving to give to you, the man who loves me.

Chapter 8

The young woman speaking to her lover

¹I wish that everyone knew that we love each other, just as they all know that I have a brother,
my own brother, who nursed at my mother's breasts.
Then whenever I met you outside, I could kiss you,
and no one would criticize me.

²No one would object if I led you to our mother's house,
to where our mother, who taught me so many things, lives.
I would like to take you to our mother's house so I could make love to you there.
That would be as delightful as juice squeezed from pomegranates, as wine mixed with spices.

The young woman speaking to herself

³Oh yes! He will put his left arm under my head,
and he will hold me close with his right arm.

The woman speaking to the other women

⁴I want you to promise me, you women of Jerusalem,
that you will not disturb us while we are making love
until we are ready to stop."

The women of Jerusalem speaking

⁵Who is that woman who is coming up from the wilderness,

the woman who is leaning on the man who loves her?

The young woman speaking to her lover

I woke you up when you were under the apricot tree

at the place where your mother conceived you,

the place where she gave birth to you.

⁶Keep me close to you,

like a seal on your heart,

or like a bracelet on your arm.

Our love for each other is as powerful as death;

it is as strong as the grave.

It is as though our love for each other bursts into flames

and burns like a hot fire.

⁷Nothing can stop us from loving each other,

not even a flood.

If a man tried to cause a woman to love him by saying he would give her everything that is in his house,

she would refuse.

The young woman's brothers speaking among themselves

⁸We have a younger sister,

and her breasts are not large yet.

So this is what we should do for her on the day that we promise some young man that he can marry her:

⁹If her chest is as flat as a wall,

we will decorate it by putting silver jewels that are like towers on her.

If she is as flat as a door,

we will decorate her with bits of cedar wood.

The young woman speaking to herself

¹⁰My chest was previously flat like a wall,

but now my breasts are big like towers.

So I am delightful to my beloved.

The young woman speaking to himself

¹¹King Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon,

and he rented it to people for them to farm it.

He required each one to pay him one thousand pieces of silver each year for the grapes that they harvested.

¹²But my body is like my own vineyard,

and you, my lover whom I call "Solomon," I am giving it to you.

You do not need to pay me a thousand pieces of silver to enjoy my body,

but I will give two hundred pieces of silver to those who take care of me.

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹³You are staying in the gardens,

my friends are listening to your voice;

so allow me to hear it, too!

The young woman speaking to her lover

¹⁴You who love me, come to me quickly;

run to me like a gazelle or young deer,

because I am as delightful as hills of spices.

Isaiah

Chapter 1

¹The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, that Yahweh showed him about Judah and Jerusalem during the years of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

²Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth, because this is what Yahweh said:

“I have raised people since they were born,
but they have rebelled against me.

³Oxen know their owners,
and donkeys know who feeds them,
but Israel does not know;
Israel does not understand.”

⁴Terrible things will happen to this sinful nation, this people group weighted down by their sin,
these children of people who do evil things,
these sons who are unjust.
They have left Yahweh,
the Holy One of Israel.
They have turned away from him.

⁵Why do you do things for which Yahweh should punish you?
Why do you continue to rebel against him?
You are like someone whose
whole mind and heart are sick.

⁶From the bottom of the foot to the top of the head,
nothing is healthy.
There are open wounds, cuts, and sores
that have not been cleaned or bandaged,
and no one has put oil on them to heal them.

⁷Enemies have ruined your country;
they have burned your towns, and there is no one left.
Foreigners plunder the crops in your fields while you watch;

they destroy everything that they see.

⁸The city of Jerusalem has become as small as a shepherd's hut.

It is like a shelter in a vineyard;

it is like a watchman's hut in a field of melons.

It is a city surrounded by its enemies who are waiting to attack it.

⁹If Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, had not allowed a few of his people to survive,

we would have all been destroyed,

like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

¹⁰Listen to what Yahweh has to say to you, you rulers of Sodom!

Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

¹¹"What do your many sacrifices mean to me?" says Yahweh;

"I do not want any more burnt offerings of rams, or the fat of bulls.

The blood of bulls, lambs, or goats does not make me happy.

¹²When you come to my temple to worship me,

who has told you to tramp around in my courtyard while you perform all those rituals?

¹³Stop bringing to me those offerings, because they are useless to me;

I am disgusted with the incense that the priests burn!

And your feasts to celebrate the new moon each month and your Sabbath days and your other festivals—

I hate them because of the wicked things that you do!

¹⁴I hate all your celebrations of the new moon and the other festivals that you celebrate.

They are like a heavy burden that I am tired of carrying.

¹⁵So when you lift up your hands to pray to me,

I will not look at you.

Even if you pray to me often,

I will not listen to you,

because it is as though your hands are covered with the blood of people whom you have killed.

¹⁶Wash your hearts and become clean!

Get rid of your evil behavior!

Stop doing things that are wrong!

¹⁷Learn to do deeds that are good and

try to cause people to do what is just.

Stop people from mistreating others,
and defend orphans and widows when people take them to court.”

¹⁸Yahweh says, “You need to think about what you do.

Even though your sins are like scarlet red,
they will be as white as snow;
though your sins are like crimson red,
they will be as white as sheeps’ wool.

¹⁹If you are willing to obey me,
you will eat good food from the land.

²⁰But if you turn away from me and rebel against me,
your enemies will slaughter you.”

That will happen because Yahweh said it.

²¹At one time you people of Jerusalem faithfully worshiped only Yahweh,
but now you have become like prostitutes who are not faithful to any husband.
The people there always acted justly and righteously,
but now your city is full of murderers.

²²Your silver is no longer pure,
and your wine has become mixed with water.

²³Your leaders are rebels;
they are friends of thieves.
They all want to get money
and make others to give them gifts in order to decide cases in court in their favor.
They do not defend orphans in court,
and they do not help widows to get what they should receive.

²⁴Therefore Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the mighty God of Israel, says,
“I will get revenge against those who are against me,
and avenge myself on my enemies.

²⁵I will raise my fist to strike you,
and I will punish you severely,
as though you were silver and I needed to heat you very greatly to melt you and get rid of the impurities.

²⁶After that happens, I will give you good judges like you had in the past.

You will have wise counselors like you had long ago.

Then people will call your city a city where people act righteously,
a faithful city.”

²⁷Because the people of Jerusalem will do what is fair,
Yahweh will restore their city,
and he will save those who repent
because of their righteousness.

²⁸But he will crush rebels and sinners,
and those who forsake him will disappear.

²⁹“You will be ashamed because you worshiped idols under the oak trees that you thought were sacred,
and you will be disgraced because you worshiped idols in the gardens that you loved so much.

³⁰You will be like a very large tree that has withered leaves,
like a garden that has dried up because it has no water.

³¹Those among you who are very strong will become like dry wood,
and the work they do will be like a spark.
Both they and the evil things that they do will burn up,
and no one will be able to put out the fire.”

Chapter 2

¹This is a message that Yahweh gave to Isaiah son of Amoz, in a vision about Judah and Jerusalem.

²In the future, the hill on which Yahweh’s temple is built
will be the most important place on the earth.
It will be as though it is the highest mountain,
as though it has been raised up above all other hills,
and people from all over the world will come there.

³People from many people groups will say to each other,
“Come, let us go up to the hill,
to the temple of Yahweh,
to worship the God whom Jacob worshiped.
There he will teach us what he desires us to know,
in order that our behavior will please him.”

They will teach us in Jerusalem;
we will learn there what Yahweh desires to tell us.

⁴Yahweh will listen to the disputes between nations,
and he will settle their arguments.

Then, instead of fighting against each other, they will hammer their swords into plow blades,
and they will hammer their spears into pruning knives.

The armies of the nations will no longer fight against each other,
and they will not even train men to fight in battles.

⁵You descendants of Jacob,
let us behave in the way that we should because Yahweh is with us!

⁶Yahweh, you have abandoned us, your people
who are descendants of Jacob,
because everywhere your people practice the customs of people who live east of Israel.
They also perform rituals to find out what will happen in the future, like the people in Philistia do.
They make agreements with foreigners who do not know Yahweh.

⁷Israel is full of silver and gold;
there are very many treasures here.
The land is full of war horses
and war chariots.

⁸But the land is also full of idols;
the people worship things that they have made with their own hands.

⁹So now they will be humbled;
Yahweh will disgrace them.
Yahweh, do not forgive them!

¹⁰All you people should crawl into the caves in the rock cliffs!
You should hide in pits in the ground
because you will be afraid of Yahweh
and of his glorious and awesome power.

¹¹Yahweh will cause you people to no longer be arrogant
and he will stop you from being proud.
On that day people will praise and honor only Yahweh.

¹²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has chosen a day
when he will judge those who are proud, every one of them,
and he will humble them.

¹³He will get rid of all those who think others should admire them, like the tall cedar trees in Lebanon,
and like all the great oak trees in the region of Bashan.

¹⁴He will get rid of all those who think they are as great as all the high hills,
as great as the high mountains.

¹⁵He will get rid of all those who think that they are like high towers
and high strong walls inside of which they are safe.

¹⁶He will destroy all those who are rich because they own big ships that carry goods to other countries
and own other beautiful ships, too.

¹⁷He will cause people to no longer be arrogant,
and he will cause them to stop being proud.

On that day people will praise and honor only Yahweh.

¹⁸All idols will disappear then.

¹⁹When Yahweh comes to terrify the people on the earth,
they will run to hide in caves in rock cliffs
and in holes in the ground,
because they are afraid of Yahweh
and of his glorious and awesome power.

²⁰On that day, people will get rid of all their gold and silver idols
that they made to worship,
and they will throw them to the bats and rats.

²¹Then they will crawl into caves
and hide in holes in the cliffs.
They will try to escape from Yahweh, who is coming to punish them;
They will fear what he will do because he is glorious and awesome,
when he comes to terrify the people on the earth.

²²So do not trust that people will save you,
because they are as powerless as a person's breath.
People certainly cannot help you!

Chapter 3

¹Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is about to take away from Jerusalem and other places in Judah everything that you depend on—
all food and water.

²He will take away heroes and other soldiers,
judges and prophets,
people who do rituals to find out what will happen in the future and the elders,

³army officers and other important people,
advisors, skilled craftsmen, and those who perform rituals of magic.

⁴Yahweh says, "I will appoint boys to be leaders;
young children will rule.

⁵People will treat each other cruelly:
people will fight against their neighbors.
Young people will say shameful things against older people,
and vulgar people will sneer at people whom others usually honor.

⁶At that time, someone will grab one of his brothers in his father's house and say to him,
'You still have a coat; people respect you for that.
So you be our leader!
You rule this city, which is now a pile of ruins.'

⁷But his brother will reply,
'No, I cannot help you,
because I do not have any extra food or clothes in this house.
So do not make me your leader!'"

⁸The people in Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah have disobeyed God,
because everything that the people do and say there opposes Yahweh,
the powerful and glorious one,
and they refuse to obey him.
They rebel against him.

⁹They even show on their faces that they oppose Yahweh.
They are proud about their sins,
like the people of Sodom were long ago;

they do not try to hide their sins; they talk about them.

Because of their sins, terrible things will certainly happen to them.

¹⁰You people must tell the righteous people that good things will happen to them;

they will enjoy the blessings that they will receive for their good deeds.

¹¹But terrible things will happen to wicked people;

Yahweh will pay them back for the evil things that they have done.

¹²Youths who have become leaders treat my people cruelly,

and women rule over my people.

My people, your leaders are misleading you;

they are causing you to do all kinds of evil things.

¹³It is as though Yahweh had taken his place in a courtroom

and were ready to accuse his people of breaking the covenant between themselves and him.

¹⁴He will stand up to declare why he should punish the elders and rulers of his people;

he says, "The people of Israel are like a vineyard that I planted,

but you leaders have made unable to bear any fruit.

Your houses are full of things that you have stolen from poor people.

¹⁵You should stop making my people suffer.

It is as though you were pushing the faces of poor people into the ground."

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁶Yahweh says this:

"The women of Jerusalem are haughty;

they walk around sticking their chins out,

and flirting with men with their eyes.

They walk with tiny steps

with bracelets on their ankles that jingle."

¹⁷So the Lord will cause sores to be on their heads,

and he will cause those beautiful women in Jerusalem to become bald.

¹⁸At the time that the Lord does that, he will also cause others to take away from the women of Jerusalem all of the beautiful things they like to wear—the ornaments on their ankles and their headbands, their crescent necklaces,

¹⁹their earrings and bracelets and veils, ²⁰their scarves and ankle bracelets and sashes, their perfumes and

charms. ²¹He will cause others to remove the women's finger rings and nose rings, ²²their nice robes and capes and veils and purses, ²³their mirrors and nice linen clothes, the ornaments for their heads, and the shawls.

²⁴Instead of smelling nice from perfume, they will stink;

instead of beautiful sashes, they will have ropes around their waists.

Instead of having fancy hairdos, they will be bald.

Instead of fancy robes, they will wear rough sackcloth,

Instead of beauty, scars of branding.

²⁵Your men will die by their enemies' swords,

and your soldiers will also die in battle.

²⁶People will mourn and cry at the gates of the city.

The city will be like a woman who sits on the ground because all her friends have deserted her.

Chapter 4

¹When that happens, there will be very few unmarried men.

So seven unmarried women will grab one man and say,

"Allow us all to marry you!

We will provide our own food and clothing.

All that we want is to no longer be disgraced because of not being married."

²But some day, Israel will be very beautiful and great. The people of Israel who will still be there will be very proud of the wonderful crops that will grow in their land. ³All the people who will remain in Jerusalem, who did not die when the enemy destroyed Jerusalem, will belong to the Lord—all those whose names are listed among those who live there. ⁴That will happen when the Lord washes away the guilt of the women of Jerusalem, and when he stops the violence on the streets of Jerusalem by punishing the people of Jerusalem. When he does that, it will be like a fire that burns up all the impure things. ⁵Then Yahweh will send a cloud of smoke during the days and a flaming fire during the nights to cover Jerusalem and all those who gather there; it will be like a canopy over God's glorious presence in the city. ⁶It will shelter the people from the sun during the daytime and protect them when there are windstorms and rain.

Chapter 5

¹Now I will sing a song about Yahweh, my dear friend,

and about his vineyard.

The vineyard was on a very fertile hillside.

²My friend plowed the ground and cleared away the stones.

Then he planted very good grapevines on that ground.

In the middle of the vineyard, he built a watchtower,

and he dug a winepress.

Then he waited each year to harvest some good grapes,

but the vines produced only sour grapes.

³Now this is what my friend Yahweh says:

"You people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah,

You are like my vineyard;

so you judge which of us has done what is right.

⁴What more could I have done for you

than what I have already done?

I expected you to be doing good deeds,

so it is disgusting that you were doing only evil deeds

like the vineyard that produced only sour grapes!

⁵So, I will now tell you what I will do to Judah, the place that is like my vineyard.

I will cut down the hedges,

and my vineyard will become a pasture.

I will tear down the walls of the cities

and allow wild animals to trample the land.

⁶I will cause it to become a wasteland

where the vines are not pruned and the ground is not hoed.

It will be a place where briars and thorns grow.

And I will command that no rain will fall on it."

⁷The nation of Israel is like the vineyard of Yahweh who is commander of the angel armies.

The people of Judah are like the garden that was pleasing to him.

He expected them to be doing what is just,

but instead, what he saw was people murdering others.

He expected that they would be doing righteous deeds,

but instead, he heard people shouting for someone to help them, because others were attacking them.

⁸Terrible things will happen to those who keep acquiring houses and fields

without paying attention to the laws about who owns the land.

You use your riches to gain more and more property,

and soon there is no more property for others to buy,

and you would be the only land owners there are in that place.

⁹But I heard Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, solemnly declare this:

"Some day, many houses will have no one to live in them,

even the large and beautiful homes will be empty.

¹⁰The land that grows vines in this place should require ten pairs of oxen to work them,
but this land would not produce enough grapes to make even twenty liters of wine.

When ten baskets of seed are sown on that land,
that land will only produce one basket of grain at harvest time."

¹¹Terrible things will happen to those who get up early each morning
to begin drinking alcoholic drinks,
and who stay awake until late at night drinking a lot more wine
until they are completely drunk.

¹²They have big parties and provide lots of wine.
At their parties, there are people playing harps and lyres and tambourines and flutes,
but they never think about what Yahweh does
or appreciate what he has created.

¹³So my people will be exiled far away
because they do not know about me.
Those who are now very important and honored will starve,
and the other people will die from thirst.

¹⁴It is as though the place where the dead people are is eagerly looking for more Israelite people,
opening its mouth to swallow them,
and a huge number of people will be thrown into that place,
including their leaders as well as a noisy crowd of people who enjoy living in Jerusalem.

¹⁵Yahweh will humble everyone;
he will humble everyone who is proud.

¹⁶But everyone will honor Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the Holy One, because he has acted justly.
God will show that he is holy by doing righteous deeds.

¹⁷Then sheep and lambs will be able to find good grass to eat;
they will pass through the ruined places to eat the grass.

¹⁸Some people who are working hard to sin,
working as hard as if they were dragging behind them the wrong and useless things that they are doing.
Terrible things will happen to them!

¹⁹They make fun of God and say to him,

"Quickly do something to punish us!

We want to see what you will do.

You, the Holy One of Israel, should do what you are planning to do,
because we want to know what it is."

²⁰Terrible things will happen to those who say
that evil is good, and that good is evil,
that darkness is light and that light is darkness,
that what is bitter is sweet and what is sweet is bitter.

²¹Terrible things will happen to those who think that they are wise
and that they are very clever.

²²Terrible things will happen to those who think that they are heroes
because they are able to drink lots of wine,
and who boast about being able to mix good alcoholic drinks.

²³If people offer these corrupt judges money so they will not punish the wicked,
they accept that money.

These same judges punish innocent people.

²⁴Therefore, just like fires burn up stubble
and dry grass shrivels up and quickly burns in flames,
it will be as though those people have roots that will rot
and have flowers that will wither.

That will happen because they rejected the laws of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies;
they have despised the messages of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵That is why Yahweh is extremely angry with his people;
it is as though his hand is raised and he is ready to smash them.
When he does that, the mountains will shake,
and the corpses of people will be scattered in the streets like manure.
But even when that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry;
he will be ready to punish his people again.

²⁶Yahweh will send a signal to summon armies of nations far away;
it is as though he will whistle to those soldiers who are in very remote places on the earth.
They will come very swiftly toward Jerusalem.

²⁷They will not get tired or stumble.

They will not stop to rest or to sleep.

None of their belts will be loose,

and none of them will have sandals with broken straps,

so they will all be ready to fight in battles.

²⁸Their arrows will be sharp,

and their bows will be ready to shoot those arrows in a battle.

Because their horses pull the chariots fast, sparks will shoot out from their hooves,

and the wheels of the chariots will spin like whirlwinds.

²⁹They will roar like fierce lions

that growl and then pounce on the animals they want to kill;

they will carry them off,

and no one will be able to rescue them.

³⁰Similarly, your enemies will roar over the people they are about to kill,

like the sea roars.

On that day, if someone looks across the land,

he will see only people who are in darkness and distress;

it will be as though even the sunlight is hidden by dark clouds.

Chapter 6

¹During the year that King Uzziah died, Yahweh showed me a vision. In the vision, I saw Yahweh sitting on a throne, high above everyone else. He was wearing a very long robe that covered the floor of the temple. ²Above him were hovering several winged creatures. Each of them had six wings. They covered their faces with two of their wings, they covered their feet with two of their wings, and they flew using two of their wings. ³They were calling to each other, saying,

“Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is holy;

he is completely holy!

The entire earth is filled with his glory.”

⁴When they spoke, the sound of their cries caused the foundation beneath the doorposts of the temple to shake, and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵Then I said, “Terrible things will happen to me, because everything that I say is sinful, and I live among people who constantly say sinful things. I will be destroyed because I have seen Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!”

⁶Then one of the winged creatures took a hot coal from the altar, using a pair of tongs. He flew to me ⁷and touched my lips with the coal. Then he said, “Look, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is ended, and your sins are forgiven.”

⁸Then I heard Yahweh asking, "Whom shall I send to be a messenger to my people? Who will go and speak for us?"
I replied, "I am here. Send me!"

⁹Then he said,

"You will go and say to the people of Israel,
'Listen carefully to what I say, but you will not understand it.
You will look very carefully,
but you will not understand.'

¹⁰I will cause you people to be unable to care;
and I will cause you people to not be able to hear,
and I will cause you people to not be able to see.
Otherwise you would see with your eyes and you would recognize what it is you are looking at,
and you would hear with your ears and be able to understand what you have heard,
and you would care deeply and with understanding,
and you would turn to me so I might save you and not punish you."

¹¹Then I said, "How long do you want me to continue to do that?"

He replied, "Do it until their cities are ruined by their enemies,
until no one is living in their houses,
do it until all the crops are stolen from their fields
and the fields are ruined.

¹²Do it until Yahweh has exiled everyone far away,
and the whole land of Israel is deserted.

¹³If even one tenth of the people survive and stay there,
their enemies will invade the land again and burn everything.
But just like when they cut down an oak tree and leave a stump, and new shoots grow from that,
the people who remain in this land will be a group that is set apart for me."

Chapter 7

¹Ahaz was the son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah. During the time that Ahaz was the king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel marched with their armies to attack Jerusalem. But they could not conquer it.

²Before they attacked, everyone in the palace in Jerusalem heard news that Aram and Israel were now allies. So King Ahaz and the people over whom he ruled were extremely afraid; they were shaking like trees shake in a windstorm.

³Then Yahweh said to me, "Take your son Shear-Jashub, and go to talk with King Ahaz. He is at the end of the aqueduct that brings water into the upper reservoir, near the road to the place where women wash clothes. ⁴Tell Ahaz to stop worrying. Tell him that he does not need to be afraid of those two kings, Rezin and Pekah. They are very angry with Judah, but they are unable to harm his country any more than completely burned-out coals could harm him. ⁵Yes, they are planning against him and saying, ⁶'We will attack Judah and conquer it. Then we will appoint Tabeel's son to be the king of Judah.' ⁷But this is what Yahweh, the Lord, says:

'It will not happen;

They will not conquer Jerusalem!

⁸The capital of Aram is Damascus,

but Damascus is ruled only by its unimportant King Rezin.

And as for Israel, within sixty-five years it will be conquered and completely destroyed.

⁹Israel's capital is Samaria, and Samaria is ruled only by its insignificant King Pekah.

So you do not need to be afraid of those two countries!

But you must trust me, because if you do not trust me firmly,

you will be defeated.'"

¹⁰Later, Yahweh gave me another message to tell to King Ahaz. ¹¹He said to tell him, "Request me, Yahweh your God, to do something that will enable you to be sure that I will help you. What you request can be in a place that is as high as the sky or as low as the place where the dead people are."

¹²But when I told that to the king, he refused. He said, "No, I will not ask Yahweh to do something to prove that he will help us."

¹³Then I said to him, "You people who are descendants of King David, listen! You are causing me to be tired of being patient. Are you also going to cause my God to stop being patient with you? ¹⁴Yahweh himself will do something for you to prove that he will help you. Listen to this: A young woman will become pregnant and give birth to a son. She will name him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.' ¹⁵By the time that child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will be able to reject what is evil and choose what is good. ¹⁶And before that child is old enough to do that, the lands of the two kings that you are very afraid of will be deserted. ¹⁷But then Yahweh will cause you and your family and your entire nation to experience terrible disasters. Those disasters will be worse than any disasters that have occurred since the country of Israel separated from Judah. Yahweh will cause the army of the king of Assyria to attack you!"

¹⁸At that time, it will be as though Yahweh will whistle to summon the army from the south of Egypt as well as the army of Assyria. They will come and surround your country like flies and bees. ¹⁹They will all come and settle everywhere—in the narrow valleys and caves in the rock cliffs, on land where there are thornbushes as well as on the fertile land. ²⁰At that time Yahweh will hire the king of Assyria to come with his army from east of the Euphrates River. They will get rid of everything in your land—the crops and the people. They will destroy everything thoroughly; it will be like a barber shaving not only a man's hair but his beard and the hair on his legs. ²¹When that happens, a farmer will be able to keep alive only one young cow and two goats. ²²However, those animals will give plenty of milk, with the result that the farmer will have curds to eat. And because there will not be many people left in the land, all the people who remain there will have plenty of milk and honey. ²³Now there are many areas where there are vineyards that are worth one thousand pieces of silver, but at that time there will be only briars and thorns in those fields. ²⁴There will be only briars and thorns in the entire land, and wild animals, with the result that men will take their bows and arrows and go there to hunt and kill animals. ²⁵No one will go to where there

previously were gardens on fertile hillsides, because briars and thorns will cover those hillsides. They will be areas where only a few cattle and sheep and goats wander around searching for something to eat.

Chapter 8

¹Then Yahweh said to me, "Make a large signboard. And write clearly on it, 'Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz' which means 'quickly plunder and steal everything'." ²So I requested Uriah the high priest and Jeberekiah's son Zechariah, men who were both honest witnesses, to watch me as I was doing that.

³Then I slept with my wife, who was a prophetess, and she became pregnant and then gave birth to a son. Then Yahweh said to me, "Give him the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, ⁴because before he is old enough to say 'papa' or 'mama', the king of Assyria will come with his army and take away all the valuable things in Damascus and in Samaria."

⁵Yahweh spoke to me again and said, "Tell the people of Judah:

⁶I have taken good care of you people,

but you have rejected that, thinking that my help was very small,

like the small canal through which water flows from the spring of Gihon into Jerusalem.

Instead, you have been happy to request help from King Rezin and King Pekah.

⁷Therefore, I, the Lord, will soon cause the powerful army of the king of Assyria, which will be like a great flood from the Euphrates River, to attack the people of Judah.

Their soldiers will be everywhere in your country, like a river that overflows all its banks.

⁸Those soldiers will go all over Judah,

like a river whose water rises as high as a person's neck.

Their army will spread over the land quickly, like an eagle,

and they will cover your entire land!

But I, your God, will be with you!"

⁹Listen, all you people in distant countries!

You can prepare to attack Judah.

You can prepare for battle, and shout your war cries,

but your armies will be crushed!

¹⁰You can prepare for what you will do to attack Judah,

but what you plan to do will be useless!

You will not succeed,

because God is with us!

¹¹Yahweh strongly warned me not to act like the other people in Judah did. He said to me,

¹²"Do not say that everything that people do is conspiring against the government,

like other people say,
and do not be afraid of the things that other people are afraid of.

¹³I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, am the one you should consider to be holy.

I am the one you should fear,
the one you must give an account to.

¹⁴Yahweh will protect you.

But as for the other people in Israel and Judah,
Yahweh will be like a stone that causes people to stumble,
like a rock that causes them to fall down.

And as for the people of Jerusalem,
he will be like a trap or a snare.

¹⁵Many people will stumble and fall down
and never get up again.

They will experience great troubles;
they will be captured by their enemies."

¹⁶So I say to you who are my disciples, seal up this scroll
on which I have written the messages that God has given to me,
and give his instructions to others who have accompanied me.

¹⁷I will wait to see what Yahweh will do.
He has rejected the descendants of Jacob,
but I will confidently expect him to help me.

¹⁸I and the children that Yahweh has given to me are like signs to warn the people of Israel;
we are warnings from Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,
the one who lives in his temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

¹⁹Some people may urge you to consult those who talk with the spirits of dead people or with those who say that they receive messages from those spirits. They whisper and mutter about what we should do in the future. But God is the one whom we should ask to guide us! It is ridiculous for people who are alive to request spirits of dead people to tell us what we should do! ²⁰Pay attention to God's instructions and teaching! If people do not say things that agree with what God teaches us, what they say is worthless. It is as though those people are in darkness. ²¹They will wander through the land, worried and hungry. And when they become very hungry, they will become very angry. They will look up toward heaven and curse God and will also curse their king. ²²They will look around the land and see only trouble and darkness and things that cause them to despair. And then they will be thrown into very black darkness.

Chapter 9

¹However, those in Judah who were distressed will not continue to suffer. Previously, Yahweh humbled the people in the land where the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali live. But in the future he will honor the people who live in the region of Galilee, along the road between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, where many foreigners live.

²Some day in the future, it will be as though the people who walked in darkness have seen a bright light.

Yes, a bright light will shine on those who live in a land where they now have great troubles.

³Yahweh, you will cause us people in Israel to rejoice;

we will become very happy.

We will rejoice about what you have done

like people rejoice when they harvest their crops,

or like soldiers rejoice

when they divide up among themselves the things that they have captured in battle.

⁴You will cause us to no longer be slaves of those who captured us;

you will lift the heavy burdens from our shoulders.

It will be as though you have broken the weapons of those who oppressed us,

like you did when you destroyed the army of the Midian people group.

⁵The boots that the enemy soldiers wore

and their clothing which has stains of blood on them

will all be burned up;

they will be fuel for a big fire.

⁶Another reason that we will rejoice is that a special child will be born for us,

a woman will give birth to a son,

and he will be our ruler.

And his names will be 'Wonderful Counselor,' 'Mighty God,' 'Our Everlasting Father,' and 'King who causes us to have Peace.'

⁷His rule and the peace that he brings will never end.

He will rule fairly and justly,

like his ancestor King David did.

This will happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, greatly desires that it happen.

⁸The Lord has warned the descendants of Jacob;

he has said that he will punish Israel.

⁹⁻¹⁰And all the people in Samaria and other places in Israel will know that,

but they are now very proud and arrogant.
They said, "Our city has been destroyed,
but we will take away the broken bricks from the ruins
and replace them with carefully cut stones.

Our sycamore fig trees have been cut down by our enemies,
but we will plant cedar trees in their place."

¹¹But Yahweh will bring the armies of Assyria, the enemies of King Rezin of Aram, to fight against Israel
and incite other nations to attack Israel.

¹²The army of Aram will come from the east,
and the army of Philistia will come from the west,
and they will destroy Israel
like a wild animal tears another animal apart and devours it.

But even after that happened, Yahweh will still be very angry with them.
He will be ready to strike them with his fist again.

¹³But even though Yahweh will punish his people like that,
they still will not return to him and worship him.
They still will not request Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to assist them.

¹⁴Therefore, in one day Yahweh will get rid of those who are like Israel's head and those who are like its tail;
the ones who are like the top of the palm tree and the ones who are like the bottom.

¹⁵The leaders of Israel are the head,
and the prophets who tell lies are the tail.

¹⁶The leaders of the people have misled them;
they have caused the people that they are ruling to be confused.

¹⁷For that reason, Yahweh is not pleased with the young men of Israel,
and he does not even act mercifully toward the widows and orphans,
because they are all ungodly and wicked,
and they all say things that are foolish.
But Yahweh still is angry with them;
he is ready to strike them with his fist again.

¹⁸When people do wicked things,
it is like a brush fire that spreads rapidly.

It burns up not only briars and thorns;
it starts a big fire in the forests
from which clouds of smoke will rise.

¹⁹It is as though the whole land is burned black
because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is extremely angry with the Israelite people.
They will become like fuel for that great fire,
and no one will try to rescue even his own brother from that fire.

²⁰The Israelite people will attack their neighbors who live in houses at the right of them to get food,
but they will still be hungry.
They will kill and eat the flesh of those who live in houses at the left,
but their stomachs will still not be full.

²¹Israelites of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim will attack each other,
and then they will both attack the people of Judah.
But even after that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry with them;
He will be ready to strike them with his fist again.

Chapter 10

¹Terrible things will happen to you judges who are unjust
and who make unfair laws.

²You refuse to help poor people,
and you do not allow them to get the things that they should get.
You allow people to steal things from widows
and do unfair things to children without fathers.

³When I punish you
by sending people from distant lands to cause you disasters,
to whom will you run to get help?
Your valuable possessions will certainly not be safe anywhere.

⁴You will be able only to stumble along as your enemies take you away with other prisoners,
or else your corpses will lie on the ground with others who have been killed.
But even after that happens,
Yahweh will still be very angry with you.

He will still be ready to strike you again with his fist.

⁵Yahweh says, "Terrible things will happen to Assyria.

It is true that their army is like a rod or a club with which I punish other nations because I am very angry with those nations.

⁶Sometimes I send the Assyrians to attack a godless nation, to fight against other people who have caused me to be angry.

I send them to capture people and to seize and take away their possessions, and to trample them like people walk on mud in the streets.

⁷But the king of Assyria does not understand; he does not realize that he is only like a weapon in my hand.

He only wants to destroy people, to get rid of many nations.

⁸He says, 'All of my army commanders will soon be kings of these nations that I conquer!

⁹We destroyed the city of Kalno as we destroyed the city of Carchemish.

We destroyed the city of Hamath as we destroyed the city of Arpad; we destroyed Samaria just like we destroyed Damascus.

¹⁰We were able to destroy all those kingdoms that were full of the images of their gods, kingdoms whose gods were stronger than the gods in Jerusalem and Samaria.

¹¹So we will defeat Jerusalem and destroy the images of gods that are there, just as we destroyed Samaria and the images that were there!

¹²But I am the Lord, and after I have used Assyria to finish what I want to do to punish the people in Jerusalem, I will punish the king of Assyria because he has been very proud and arrogant.

¹³He says, 'By my own great power I have done these things.

I have been able to do them because I am very wise and very intelligent.

My army removed the barriers at the borders of nations and carried away all their valuable things.

My mighty army has humiliated all their people.

¹⁴Like someone who reaches into a bird's nest to take away the eggs, we have taken away the treasures of other countries.

The people were not like birds that would have flapped their wings or chirp loudly to protest about their eggs being stolen;

the people did not object at all to their treasures being stolen.'

¹⁵But I am Yahweh, and I say that an ax certainly cannot boast about being stronger than the person who uses it, and a saw is not greater than the person who uses it.

A rod cannot control the one who holds it,

and a wooden club cannot lift up a person.

So the king of Assyria should not boast that he has done these things with his own wisdom and strength.

¹⁶I am the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who will send a plague among the best soldiers of Assyria;

it will be like a fire that will kill them and get rid of their glory.

¹⁷Yahweh is like a light for the people of Israel, like a fire;

the Holy One who rules Israel is like a flame.

The soldiers of Assyria are like thorns and briers,

and Yahweh will burn them up in one day.

¹⁸There are glorious forests and fertile farmlands in Assyria, but Yahweh will completely destroy them; they will be like a very sick person who shrivels up and then dies.

¹⁹There will be very few trees left in those forests;

even a child will be able to count them."

²⁰In the future there will be only a few people left in Israel;

not many descendants of Jacob will still be alive.

But they will no longer rely on the king of Assyria,

the king of the nation that tried to destroy them.

Instead, they will faithfully trust in Yahweh, the Holy One who rules Israel.

²¹Those Israelites will return to their mighty God.

²²Now, the people of Israel are as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore,

but only a few of them will return from the countries to which they will be exiled.

Yahweh has decided to destroy most of the Israelites,

and that is what he must do because he is completely just.

²³Yes, the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has already decided to destroy the entire land of Israel.

²⁴This is what the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"My people in Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the army of Assyria when they beat you with rods and clubs, like the men of Egypt did to your ancestors long ago.

²⁵Soon I will no longer be angry with you,

and then I will be angry with the people of Assyria and destroy them!"

²⁶Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will strike them with his whip.

He will do to them as he did when he defeated the army of the Midian people group,

and as he did when he caused the army of Egypt to drown in the Sea of Reeds.

²⁷One day in the future, Yahweh will cause the army of Assyria to stop oppressing you, his people;

he will end your suffering and your being slaves of the people of Assyria;

you will become too strong for them.

²⁸One day in the future this will be the situation: The army of Assyria has entered northern Judah near Aiath;

they have gone through Migron

and stored their supplies at Micmash, north of Jerusalem.

²⁹They have crossed through a mountain pass

and set up their tents at Geba.

People in Ramah will tremble because they are afraid.

The people of Gibeah, where King Saul was born, have all run away.

³⁰You people of Gallim will cry out for help!

They will shout to the people of the city of Laish near Jerusalem to warn them!

The people of Anathoth will suffer a lot.

³¹The people of Madmenah north of Jerusalem are all running away,

and the people of Gebim close to Jerusalem are trying to hide.

³²The soldiers of Assyria will stop at the city of Nob outside Jerusalem.

They will shake their fists

as they threaten the people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

³³But listen to this! Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

with his great power will destroy the mighty army of Assyria.

It is as though they are a huge tree that he will cut down.

³⁴He will destroy the soldiers of Assyria

as men use big axes to cut down the tall trees in the forests of Lebanon.

Chapter 11

¹Like a new branch often grows from the stump of a tree,

there will be a descendant of King David who will be a new king.

²The Spirit of Yahweh will always be with him.

The Spirit will enable him to be wise and to understand many things;

The Spirit will enable him to decide what is good to do and will give him great power.

The Spirit will enable him to know Yahweh and to revere him.

³He will be glad to obey Yahweh.

He will not decide whether someone is righteous or not only by seeing what that person looks like,
or by listening to what others say about that person.

⁴He will judge the cases of needy people fairly;

and he will act justly toward poor people.

He will punish evil people as a result of what he decides;

he will get rid of wicked people because of the evil things they have done.

⁵He will always act righteously;

the good things he does will be like a belt around his waist.

He will always speak what is true;

the true words he speaks will be like a sash around his waist.

⁶When he becomes king, wolves and lambs will live together peacefully;

leopards, instead of killing baby goats,

will lie down with them.

Similarly, fat, healthy calves and lions will eat food together;

and a young child will take care of them.

⁷Cows and bears will eat together;

bear cubs and calves will lie down together.

Lions will not eat other animals;

instead, they will eat hay like cows do.

⁸Babies will play safely near the holes where cobra snakes live;

small children will even put their hands into nests of poisonous snakes,

and the snakes will not harm them.

⁹No creatures will harm or kill other creatures on Mount Zion, my holy hill;

and the earth will be filled with people who know me,

as the seas are full of water.

¹⁰At that time, a descendant of King David will hold up a flag

to signal to the people of all people groups that they should gather around him;
they will come to him to get his advice,
and the place where he lives will be glorious.

¹¹At that time, Yahweh will reach out his hand as he did long ago;
he will enable those who had been exiled from Israel to return home,
from Assyria, from northern Egypt, from southern Egypt,
from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath, and from all the distant countries near the sea.

¹²Yahweh will raise his flag among all the people groups,
and he will gather together the people of Israel who were exiled long ago.
He will gather from very distant places on the earth
the people of Judah whom he had scattered to those places.

¹³Then, the people of Israel and the people of Judah will not be jealous of each other any longer,
and they will no longer be enemies of each other.

¹⁴Their armies will join together to attack the people of Philistia to the west.
And together they will attack nations to the east;
they will defeat those nations and take away all their valuable possessions.
They will capture the areas of Edom and Moab,
and they will rule the people of the Ammon people group.

¹⁵Yahweh will make a dry road through the sea near Egypt.
It will be as though he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River
and send a strong wind to cause it to divide into seven streams,
with the result that people will be able to walk across those streams.

¹⁶Because he will make a highway for his people who are living in Assyria,
they will be able to return to their own land,
just like long ago he made a path for the people of Israel
so that they could go through the water
when they left Egypt.

Chapter 12

¹At that time, you people of Jerusalem will sing this song:
"Yahweh, we praise you!

Previously, you were angry with us,
but you are not angry now
and you have comforted us.

²Amazingly, you have come to save us,
so we will trust in you and not be afraid.

Yahweh our God, you enable us to be strong;
you are the one about whom we sing;
you have rescued us from our enemies.”

³You, his people, will greatly rejoice because he has rescued you,
like you enjoy drinking water from a fountain.

⁴At that time you will say,
“We should thank Yahweh! We should praise him!
We should tell the people of all the people groups what he has done;
we should enable them to know that he is very great!

⁵We should sing to Yahweh, because he has done wonderful things.
We should enable everyone in the world to know it!

⁶You people of Jerusalem, shout joyfully to praise Yahweh,
because he is the great Holy One whom we Israelite people worship,
and he lives among us!”

Chapter 13

¹I, Isaiah son of Amoz, received from Yahweh this message about the city of Babylon:

²Lift up a flag on the bare top of a hill,
to signal that an army should come to attack Babylon.
Shout to them and wave your hand to signal to them
that they should march through the city gates into the palaces of the proud rulers of Babylon!

³Yahweh says, “I have commanded those who are set apart to do this work for me—
I have summoned the warriors whom I have chosen to punish the people of Babylon because I am very angry with them,
and those soldiers will be very proud when they do that.”

⁴Listen to the noise on the mountains,
which is the noise of a huge army marching!

It is the noise made by people of many people groups shouting.

Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has summoned this army to gather together.

⁵They come from countries that are far away,

from the most remote places on the earth.

They are like weapons that Yahweh will use to punish the people with whom he is very angry,
and to destroy the entire country of Babylonia.

⁶You people of Babylon will scream because you will be terrified,

because it will be the time that Yahweh has determined,

the time for the all-powerful God to destroy your city.

⁷Because that will happen, all of your people will be very afraid,

with the result that they will be unable even to lift their arms.

⁸All of you will be terrified.

You will have severe pains

like a woman has when she is giving birth to a baby.

You will look at each other helplessly,

and it will show on your faces that you feel horror.

⁹Listen to this, you people of Babylon: The day that Yahweh has chosen to act is near,

the day on which he will furiously and fiercely punish you because he is very angry with you.

He will cause your land of Babylonia to be desolate,

and he will destroy all the sinners in it.

¹⁰When that happens, none of the stars will shine.

When the sun rises, it will be dark,

and there will be no light from the moon at night.

¹¹Yahweh says, "I will punish everyone in the world for the evil things that they do;

I will punish the wicked people for the sins that they have committed.

I will stop arrogant people from being proud,

and I will stop cruel people from being so arrogant.

¹²And because I will cause most people to die,

people will be harder to find than gold,

harder to find than fine gold from Ophir in Arabia.

¹³I will shake the sky,

and the earth will also move out of its place.

That will happen when I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, punish wicked people, when I show them that I am extremely angry with them.

¹⁴All the foreigners in Babylon will run around like deer that are being hunted, like sheep that do not have a shepherd.

They will try to find other people from their countries, and then they will escape from Babylon and return to their own countries.

¹⁵Anyone who is captured in Babylon will be killed by their enemies' swords.

¹⁶Their little children will be dashed to pieces on the rocks while their parents watch; their enemies will steal everything valuable from their houses and will force their wives to sleep with them.

¹⁷Look! I am going to incite the people of Media to attack Babylon. The army of Media will attack Babylon, even if they are offered silver or gold if they promise to not attack it.

¹⁸With their arrows, the soldiers of Media will shoot the young men of Babylon; they will not even act mercifully toward infants or children!"

¹⁹Babylon has been a very beautiful city; all the people of Babylonia have been very proud of Babylon, their capital city; but God will destroy Babylon, like he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁰No one will ever live in Babylon again. It will be deserted forever. Nomads will refuse to set up their tents there; shepherds will not bring their flocks of sheep to rest there.

²¹Animals that live in the desert will be there; jackals will live in the ruins of the houses. Owls will live in the ruins, and ostriches and wild goats will romp around there.

²²Hyenas will howl in the ruined towers, and jackals will make their dens in the ruins of the palaces that were previously very beautiful. The time when Babylon will be destroyed is very near; Babylon will not exist much longer.

Chapter 14

¹But Yahweh will act mercifully toward the Israelite people; he will choose the people of Israel to be his people again, and he will allow them to return here and live in their own land again. Then people from many other countries will come here and unite with the Israelite people. ²People of other nations will help them to return to their own land, and those who come from other countries will work for the Israelite people. Those who captured people of Israel will be captured by Israelite soldiers, and the people of Israel will rule over the people who previously oppressed them.

³Some day Yahweh will free you Israelite people from suffering and trouble and from being afraid, and from being cruelly treated as slaves. ⁴When that happens, you will make fun of the king of Babylon by singing a song like this:

"You treated us cruelly, but that has ended!

You insulted others and made them suffer, but you can do this no longer!

⁵You evil ruler, Yahweh has destroyed your power,

and you will oppress people no longer!

⁶You attacked people many times

because you were very angry with them,

and you subdued other nations

by causing them to suffer without stopping.

⁷But soon everything will be quiet and peaceful on the earth.

Everyone will sing again!

⁸It will be as though even the trees in the forests will joyfully sing this song,

the cyprus trees and the cedar trees in Lebanon will sing it:

'You have been overthrown,

and now no one comes to chop us down.'

⁹The dead people are all eagerly waiting for you to go to the place where they are.

The spirits of the world leaders

will be delighted to welcome you;

those who were kings of many nations before they died

will stand up to welcome you.

¹⁰They will all shout to you together,

'Now you are as weak as we are!'

¹¹You were very proud and powerful,

but all that ended when you died,

along with the sounds of harps being played in your palace.

Now in your grave maggots will be under you like a sheet,
and worms will cover you like a blanket.'

¹²You have disappeared from the earth like a star that fell from the sky;
you were very well known,
like the morning star is seen by everyone;
you destroyed many nations,
but now you have been destroyed.

¹³You proudly said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven, to my throne above God's stars.
I will rule on the mountain where the gods gather together, far in the north.

¹⁴I will ascend above the clouds and become like God himself!

¹⁵But you were not able to do that;
Instead, you were carried down to your grave,
and you went to the place where the dead people are.

¹⁶The other dead people there stare at you;
they wonder what happened to you.
They say, 'Is this the man who caused the earth to shake
and caused the people in many kingdoms to tremble?

¹⁷Is this the man who tried to cause the world to become a desert,
who conquered its cities and did not allow the people whom he captured to return to their homes?

¹⁸All the kings of the earth who have died were greatly honored when they were buried.

¹⁹Someone will cast you aside, but not into a grave, like a branch that they throw away.

The dead cover you like a garment, those pierced by the sword, who go down to be among the stones where the dead rest.

²⁰Your dead body will not be buried with them
because you have destroyed your land
and have caused your own people to be killed.

The descendants of wicked people like you will never be spoken of again."

²¹People will say, "Slaughter this man's children
because of the sins that their ancestors committed!

Do not allow them to become rulers, and conquer all the nations in the world,
and fill the world with the cities that they rule!"

²²This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"I myself will cause Babylon to be conquered.

I will get rid of Babylon and its people and their descendants.

²³I will cause Babylon to be a place where owls live,

a place full of swamps;

I will destroy it completely

as though I were sweeping it with a broom.

That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say."

²⁴Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has also solemnly promised this:

"The things that I have planned will surely happen.

²⁵When the army of Assyria is in my land of Israel,

I will crush them.

It will be as though I had trampled them on my mountains.

My people will no longer be the slaves of the people of Assyria;

It will be as though I had taken away the burdens that were on their shoulders.

²⁶There is a plan for everyone on the earth,

a plan to show the power of Yahweh to punish all the nations.

²⁷Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has spoken,

and no one can change his mind.

When Yahweh raises his fist to strike Assyria,

no one will be able to stop him."

²⁸I received this message from Yahweh during the year that King Ahaz died:

²⁹Do not rejoice, all you people of Philistia, that the enemy army that attacked you has been defeated

and that their king is dead.

He was as dangerous as a snake,

but there will be another king,

who will be more dangerous than a cobra;

he will be like a quick-moving poisonous snake.

³⁰Those of my people who are very poor will take care of their flocks of sheep,

and the needy people will lie down safely,

but I will cause you people of Philistia who are still alive

to die from famine.

³¹So, you people of Philistia, wail at the gates of your cities!

You should be extremely afraid,

because a very powerful army will come from the north to attack you;

their chariots will stir up the dust like a cloud of smoke.

Each of their soldiers is ready to fight.

³²If messengers from Philistia come to us Israelite people,

this is what we must tell them:

“Yahweh has created Jerusalem, not Philistia,

and his people who are oppressed will be safe inside the walls of Jerusalem.”

Chapter 15

¹Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about the Moab people group:

In one night two important cities in Moab, Ar and Kir, will be destroyed.

²The people of Dibon, the capital city, will go to their temple to mourn;

they will go to their high places set on the hilltops, and there they will weep.

They will wail because of what happened to Nebo and Medeba in the south;

they will all shave the hair of their heads, and the men will cut off their beards to show that they are grieving.

³In the streets people will wear rough sackcloth,

and on their flat rooftops and in the city plazas all people will wail

with tears streaming down their faces.

⁴The people of the city of Heshbon and the towns of Elealeh in the north of Moab will cry out;

people as far away as the town of Jahaz in the south will hear them wailing.

Therefore the soldiers of Moab will tremble and cry out,

and they will be very afraid.

⁵Yahweh feels very sorry for the people of Moab;

they will flee to the towns of Zoar and Eglath Shelishiyah in the far south.

They will cry as they walk up to the town of Luhith.

All along the road to the town of Horonaim people will mourn

because their country has been destroyed.

⁶The water in the Valley of Nimrim will dry up.

The grass there will be withered;
the green plants will all be gone,
and there will be nothing left that is green.

⁷The people will pick up their possessions
and carry them across the brook of the Willows.

⁸Throughout the country of Moab, people will be crying;
people as far away as Eglaim in the south and Beer Elim in the north will hear them wailing.

⁹The stream near Dimon will become red from the blood of people who have been killed,
but I will cause the people of Moab to experience even more trouble:
lions will attack those who are trying to escape from Moab
and will also attack the people who remain in that country.

Chapter 16

¹The rulers of Moab will say to each other,

"We must send some lambs from the city of Sela as a gift to the ruler of Judah to persuade him to not allow his army to attack us anymore.

We should send them through the desert to the king in Jerusalem."

²The women of Moab will be left alone at the fords of the Arnon River;
they will be like birds that have been pushed out of their nests.

³They will cry out, "Help us!

Tell us what we should do!

Protect us completely,

we who are running away from our enemies,

and do not betray us.

⁴Allow those of us who are fleeing from Moab to stay with you;

hide us from our enemies who want to destroy us!

Some day there will be no one to oppress us,

and our enemies will stop destroying our land."

⁵Then Yahweh will appoint someone to be king

who will be a descendant of King David.

As this man rules, he will be merciful and truthful.

He will always do what is fair

and quickly do what is righteous.

⁶We people of Judah have heard about the people of Moab;
we have heard that they are very proud and conceited;
they are insolent,
but what they say about themselves is not true.

⁷Some day all the people in Moab will weep.
They will all mourn,
because there will be no more raisin cakes in the city of Kir Hareseth.
But more than the cakes, they mourn for the people who lived there, who were all killed.

⁸The crops in the fields of Heshbon will wither,
and the vineyards of Sibmah will wither also.
The armies of other nations will destroy Moab,
which is like a beautiful grapevine
whose branches spread north to Jazer,
and east to the desert.
Its branches spread very far west,
to the west side of the Dead Sea.

⁹So I will weep for Jazer
and for the grapevines of Sibmah.
I will shed tears for all of you.
I will cry because people will no longer shout joyfully, like they usually do
when they gather the fruit that ripens in the summer and the other crops.

¹⁰People will no longer be glad at harvest time.
No one will sing in the vineyards;
no one will shout joyfully.
No one will tread on grapes to get grape juice for wine;
there will be nothing to shout about joyfully.

¹¹I cry in my inner being for Moab;
my groaning is like a sad song played on a harp.
I am sad in my inner being for Kir Hareseth.

¹²The people of Moab will go and pray at their high places,

but that will not help them.

They will cry out to their gods in their temples,

but no one will be able to rescue them.

¹³Yahweh has already spoken those things about Moab. ¹⁴But now he says that exactly three years from now, he will destroy all the things that the people of Moab have been proud of. Even though they have a huge number of people in Moab now, only a few people will remain alive, and they will be weak.

Chapter 17

¹Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about Damascus, the capital of Aram:

“Listen carefully! Damascus will no longer be a city;

it will be only a heap of ruins!

²The towns near the city of Aroer will be abandoned.

Flocks of sheep will eat grass in the streets and lie down there,

and there will be no one to chase them away.

³The cities in Israel will not have walls around them to protect them.

The power of the kingdom of Damascus will be ended,

and the few people who will remain in Aram will be disgraced like the people in Israel were disgraced.”

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

⁴“At that time, Israel will become insignificant.

It will be like a fat person who has become very thin.

⁵The entire land will be like a field where the harvesters have cut all the grain;

there will be nothing left,

like the fields in the Valley of Rephaim after all the crops have been harvested.

⁶Only a few of the Israelite people will remain,

like the few olives that remain on the top of a tree after the workers have shaken all the other olives to the ground.

There will be only two or three olives in the top branches,

or four or five olives on the other branches.”

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

⁷Then at that time, you people of Israel will trust in God, your creator,

the Holy One of Israel.

⁸You will no longer seek to get help from your idols

or worship the idols that you have made with your own hands.

You will never again bow down in front of the poles where you worshiped the goddess Asherah.

You will never again worship at the high places that you have built to burn incense to idols.

⁹The largest cities in Israel will be abandoned, like the land that the Hiv and Amor people groups abandoned when the Israelites attacked them long ago. No people will live there.

¹⁰That will happen because you have stopped worshiping God,
who is like a huge rock on top of which you can be safe.

You have forgotten that he is the one who can hide you.

So now you plant very nice grapevines
and even unusual ones that come from other countries.

¹¹But even if they sprout leaves on the day you plant them,
and even if they produce blossoms on that same morning,
at harvest time, there will not be any grapes for you to pick.

All that you will get is much of agony and suffering.

¹²Listen! The armies of many nations will roar like the sea roars.
It will sound like noise of crashing waves.

¹³But even though their loud roaring will be like the sound of crashing waves,
when Yahweh rebukes them, they will run far away.

They will flee like chaff on the hills scatters when the wind blows,
like tumbleweeds scatter when a windstorm blows.

¹⁴And even though you people of Israel will be terrified,
in the morning your enemies will all be gone.
That is what will happen to those who invade our land and steal our possessions.

Chapter 18

¹Terrible things will happen to you people of Ethiopia!

In your land there are many boats at the upper part of the Nile River.

²Your rulers send ambassadors that sail quickly down the river in papyrus boats.

Tell your messengers to go quickly!

Go to people who are tall and who have smooth skins.

People everywhere are afraid of those people,
because they conquer and destroy other nations;
they are people who live in a land that rivers divide.

³You messengers must tell to the people of the world,
to all people everywhere,
“Look when the battle flag is lifted on top of the mountain,
and listen when the ram’s horn blows
to signal that the battle is about to begin.” ⁴Listen because Yahweh has told me this:
“I will watch quietly from where I live.
I will watch quietly like the heat that shimmers as it rises on a summer day.
I will work effectively like the cloud of mist that settles during the heat of harvest. ⁵Before the harvest, the farmer
sees the grapevines making blossoms and the flowers growing into grapes,
and he knows that the time is right to cut off the new growth and spreading branches that keep the tree from
growing strong.
In the same way I know when the time is right to take action against that nation, and I will send an army to attack
it.
⁶All the soldiers in that nation’s army will be killed,
and their corpses will lie in the fields for vultures to eat their flesh in the summer.
Then wild animals will chew on their bones all during the winter.”
⁷At that time, the people of the nation that rivers divide will take gifts to Yahweh in Jerusalem.
Those people are tall and have smooth skins; people everywhere are afraid of those people,
because they conquer and destroy other nations,
will take gifts to Jerusalem, the city where Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, lives.

Chapter 19

¹Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about Egypt:
Listen to this! I, Yahweh, am coming toward Egypt,
riding on a fast-moving cloud.
The idols in Egypt will tremble when I appear,
and the people of Egypt will be extremely afraid.
²I will cause the people of Egypt to fight against each other:
men will fight against their brothers,
neighbors will fight against each other,
people of one city will fight against the people of another city,
people of one province will fight against the people of another province.
³The people of Egypt will become very discouraged,

and I will cause their plans to not be successful.

They will plead with idols and sorcerers and those who talk with spirits of dead people to tell them what they should do.

⁴Then I will enable someone who will treat them very cruelly to become their king.

That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say.

⁵Some day the water in the Nile River will dry up,
and the riverbed will become very dry.

⁶The branches of the river will all dry up.

The canals along the river will stink
because of the withering and rotting reeds and bulrushes.

⁷All the plants along the river and all the crops in the fields bordering the river will dry up;
then they will blow away and disappear.

⁸The fishermen will throw into the river lines with hooks on them and nets,
and then they will groan and be very discouraged;
they will be sad because there will be no fish in the river.

⁹Those who weave cloth from flax will not know what to do
because there will be no thread for them to weave.

¹⁰They will all despair
and be very discouraged.

¹¹The officials in the city of Zoan in northern Egypt are foolish.

The advice that they gave to the king was worthless.

Why do they continue to tell the king that they are wise,
that they are descendants of wise kings who lived long ago?

¹²King, where are your wise advisors now?

If you had any wise advisors, they could tell you what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has planned to do to Egypt!

¹³Yes, the officials of Zoan have become foolish,
and the leaders in the city of Memphis in northern Egypt have deceived themselves.
All the leaders of the people have caused their people to do wrong things.

¹⁴Yahweh has caused them to be very foolish,
with the result that in everything that they do, it is as though the people of Egypt stagger

like a drunken person staggers and slips in his own vomit.

¹⁵There is no one in Egypt, rich or poor, important or unimportant, who will be able to help them.

¹⁶At that time, the people of Egypt will be as helpless as women. They will tremble, being terrified because they know that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has raised his fist, intending to strike them. ¹⁷The people of Egypt will be afraid of the people of Judah, and anyone who mentions Judah to them will cause them to be terrified, because that will remind them of what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is planning to do to them.

¹⁸At that time, people in five cities in Egypt will solemnly declare that they will serve Yahweh. They will learn to speak the Hebrew language. One of those cities will be called "City of the Sun."

¹⁹At that time, there will be an altar for worshiping Yahweh in the center of Egypt, and there will be a pillar to honor Yahweh at the border between Egypt and Israel. ²⁰That will be a sign to indicate that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is worshiped in the land of Egypt. And when the people cry out to Yahweh to help them because others are oppressing them, he will send to them someone who will defend and rescue them. ²¹Yahweh will enable the people of Egypt to know who he is. At that time they will admit that he is God. They will worship him and bring to him offerings of grain and other sacrifices. They will solemnly promise to do things for Yahweh, and they will do what they promise. ²²After Yahweh has punished Egypt, he will cause their troubles to end. The people of Egypt will turn to Yahweh, and he will listen when they plead to him for help, and he will cause their troubles to cease.

²³At that time, there will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria. As a result, the people of Egypt will be able to travel easily to Assyria, and the people of Assyria will be able to travel easily to Egypt. And the people of both countries will worship Yahweh. ²⁴And Israel will be their ally. All three nations will be friendly to each other, and the people of Israel will be a blessing to the people of the entire world. ²⁵Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will bless them; he will say, "You people of Egypt are now my people. You people of Assyria, I have established your country. You people of Israel are the people whom I have chosen to belong to me."

Chapter 20

¹One year King Sargon of Assyria sent the chief commander of his army to take his soldiers to capture the city of Ashdod in Philistia. At that time, ²Yahweh told Isaiah, "Take off the rough sackcloth that you have been wearing and take off your sandals." So Isaiah did that, and then he walked around naked and barefoot for three years.

³Then Yahweh said this to the people of Judah: "My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the past three years. That is to show the terrible disasters that I will cause the people of Egypt and Ethiopia to experience. ⁴What will happen is that the army of the king of Assyria will invade those countries and capture many of the people and take them away as their prisoners. They will force all of them, including both the young ones and the old ones, to walk naked and barefoot. They will also force them to have no clothes around their buttocks, which will cause the people of Egypt to be ashamed. ⁵Then the people of other countries who trusted that the armies of Egypt and Ethiopia would be able to help them will be very dismayed and afraid. ⁶They will say, 'We thought that the armies of Egypt and Ethiopia would help us and defend us, but they have been destroyed, so there is no way that we can escape from being destroyed by the army of the king of Assyria!'"

Chapter 21

¹Yahweh gave this message about a land soon to become a desert:

An army will soon come from the southern Judean wilderness to invade that land;

they are an army that causes their enemies to be terrified,

an army that will come sweeping through the wilderness from a terrible land.

²Yahweh showed me a terrifying vision:

In the vision I saw an army

that will betray people and steal their possessions after they conquer them.

Yahweh said, "You armies from Elam and Media, surround Babylon and prepare to attack it!

I will cause the groaning and suffering that Babylon caused to cease!"

³Because of that, my body is full of pain;

my pain is like the pain that women who are giving birth experience.

When I hear about and see what God is planning to do,

I am shocked.

⁴My heart shakes within me, and I tremble with fear.

Early evening is my favorite time of day,

but now terror has taken over and I am afraid.

⁵In the vision I saw that the leaders of Babylonia were preparing a great feast.

They had spread rugs for people to sit on;

everyone was eating and drinking.

But you should get up and prepare your shields, you princes of Babylon,

because you are about to be attacked!

⁶Then Yahweh said to me,

"Put a watchman on the wall of Jerusalem,

and tell him to shout what he sees.

⁷Tell him to watch for chariots pulled by pairs of horses,

and men riding camels and donkeys, coming from Babylon.

Tell the watchman to watch and listen carefully!"

⁸So I did that, and one day the watchman called out,

"Day after day I have stood on this watchtower,

and I have continued to watch during the day and during the night.

⁹A man comes riding in a chariot pulled by two horses.

I called out to him, and he answered,

'Babylon has been destroyed!

All the idols in Babylon lie in pieces on the ground!'"

¹⁰My people in Judah, the army of Babylon has caused you to suffer greatly

as though you were grain that was threshed and winnowed.

But now I have told you what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom we Israelites worship, told me about Babylon.

¹¹Yahweh gave this message about Edom:

Someone from Edom has been calling to me saying,

“Watchman, how long will it be before the night is over?”

¹²The watchman, replied,

“It will soon be morning, but after that, it will soon be night again.

If you want to ask your question, then ask it now,

and then come back again.”

¹³Yahweh gave this message about Arabia:

Give this message to people traveling in caravans from the town of Dedan in northwest Arabia, travelers who camp in the scrub there.

Tell them to bring water for those who are thirsty.

¹⁴And you people who live in the city of Tema in northwest Arabia,
must bring food for the refugees who are fleeing from their enemies.

¹⁵They are fleeing in order not to be killed by their enemies’ swords
and not to be shot in battles by arrows.

¹⁶Yahweh said to me,

“Exactly one year from now,

all the greatness of the region of Kedar in Arabia will end.

¹⁷Only a few of their soldiers who know well how to shoot arrows will remain alive.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 22

¹Yahweh gave this message about Jerusalem, about the valley where Yahweh showed me this vision.

Why is everyone foolishly running up to their flat rooftops?

²Everyone in the city seems to be shouting.

There are a lot of corpses in the city,

but they were not killed by their enemies’ swords.

They did not die in battles;

instead, they died from diseases and hunger.

³All the leaders of the city fled.

But then they were captured because they did not have bows and arrows to defend themselves.

Your soldiers tried to flee while the enemy army was still far away,

but they also were captured.

⁴That is why I said, "Allow me to cry alone;

do not try to comfort me about my people being slaughtered."

⁵Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has chosen a time when there will be a great uproar, soldiers marching, and people being terrified

in the valley where I received this vision.

It will be a time when our city walls will be battered down

and the people's cries for help will be heard in the mountains.

⁶The armies from Elam and Kir in Media will attack,

driving chariots and carrying shields.

⁷Our beautiful valleys will be filled with our enemies' chariots,

and the men who drive the chariots will stand outside our city gates.

⁸God will cause the walls that protect the cities in Judah to fall down.

You people of Jerusalem will run to get the weapons that are stored in the building called "the Hall of the Forest."

⁹You will see that there are many breaks in the walls of Jerusalem.

You will store water in the lower pool in the city.

¹⁰You will inspect the houses in Jerusalem,

and some of them you will tear down to use the stones to repair the city wall.

¹¹Between the walls of the city you will build a reservoir to store water from the old pool.

But you will never request help from the one who made the city;

you have never depended on Yahweh, who planned this city long ago.

¹²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, told you to weep and mourn;

he told you to shave your heads and to wear rough sackcloth

to show that you were sorry for the sins that you had committed.

¹³But instead of doing that, you were happy and celebrated;

you slaughtered cattle and sheep

in order to cook their meat and eat it and drink wine.

You said, "Let us eat and drink all that we want to,

because it is possible that we will die tomorrow!"

¹⁴So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, revealed this to me: "I will never forgive my people for sinning like this!"

¹⁵Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, said this to me: "Go to Shebna, the official who supervises the workers in the palace, and give this message to him:

¹⁶Who do you think you are?

Who gave you the authority to build a beautiful tomb where you will be buried,
chiseling it out of the rocky cliff high above this valley?"

¹⁷You think that you are a great man, but Yahweh is about to hurl you away.

It will be as though he had seized you,

¹⁸rolled you into a ball,

and throw you away in a large distant land.

You will die and be buried there,

and your beautiful chariots will stay there in the hands of your enemies.

And because of what happens to you, your master, the king, will be very ashamed.

¹⁹Yahweh says, "I will force you to quit working in the palace;

you will be forced out from your important position.

²⁰Then I will summon Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who has served me well, to replace you. ²¹I will make him wear your robe and fasten your sash around him, and I will give to him the authority that you had. He will be like a father to the people of Jerusalem and all the other towns in Judah. ²²I will give to him authority over what happens in the palace where King David lived; when he decides something, no one will be able to oppose it; when he refuses to do something, no one will be able to force him to do it. ²³I will cause his family to be greatly respected, because I will put him firmly in his position as supervisor of the workers in the palace, like a nail that is firmly hammered into a wall. ²⁴Others will enable him to have much responsibility, with the result that all the members of his family, even the most insignificant ones, will be honored.

²⁵Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also says, "Shebna is like a peg that is firmly fastened to the wall. But there will be a time when I will remove him from his position; he will lose his power, and everything that he promoted will fail." That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.

Chapter 23

¹I, Isaiah, received this message from Yahweh for you, the people in the city of Tyre:

You sailors on ships from Tarshish,

weep, because the harbor of Tyre and all the houses in the city have been destroyed.

The reports that you heard in the Island of Cyprus about Tyre are true.

²You people who live along the coast, you merchants of the city of Sidon, mourn silently.

Your sailors went across the seas to make you rich, there in Tyre.

³They sailed across deep seas
to buy grain in Egypt, grain from the Valley of Shihor.
This wealth came down the Nile River, and you, Tyre, were the place where the people of all nations traded.

⁴But now you people in Sidon should be ashamed,
because you trusted in Tyre, which has been a strong fortress on an island in the sea.
Tyre is like a woman who is saying,
“Now it is as though I have not given birth to any children,
or raised any sons or daughters.”

⁵When the people of Egypt hear what has happened to Tyre,
they will grieve very much.

⁶Sail to Tarshish and tell them what happened;
weep, you people who live along the coast.

⁷The people in the very old city of Tyre were previously joyful.
Traders from Tyre established colonies in many distant nations.

⁸People from Tyre appointed kings over other places;
their traders were wealthy;
they were as powerful and wealthy as kings.

Who caused the people of Tyre to experience this disaster?

⁹It was Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who did it;
he did it in order to cause you people in Tyre to not be proud anymore,
to humiliate you men who are honored all over the world.

¹⁰You people of Tarshish, you must grow crops in your land instead of trading;
spread out over your land like the Nile River spreads over the land of Egypt when it floods,
because there is no harbor in Tyre for your ships now.

¹¹It is as though Yahweh stretched out his hand over the sea
and shook the kingdoms of the earth.
He commanded that in Phoenicia
all its fortresses must be destroyed.

¹²He said to the people of Sidon,
“You will never rejoice again, because you will be crushed;
even if you flee to the island of Cyprus,

you will not escape from troubles; you will have no peace.”

¹³Think about what happened in Babylonia:

the people who were in that land have disappeared.

The armies of Assyria have caused that land to become a place where wild animals from the desert live.

They built dirt ramps to the top of the walls of the city of Babylon;

then they entered the city and tore down the palaces

and caused the city to become a heap of rubble.

¹⁴So wail, you sailors on the ships of Tarshish,

because the harbor in Tyre where your ships stop is destroyed!

¹⁵For seventy years, which is as long as kings usually live, people will forget about Tyre. But then it will be rebuilt. What will happen there will be like what happened to a prostitute in this song:

¹⁶You harlot, whom people had forgotten,

play your harp well,

and sing many songs,

in order that people will remember you again.

¹⁷It is true that after seventy years Yahweh will restore Tyre. Their merchants will again earn a lot of money by buying things from and selling things to many other nations.

¹⁸But their profits will be given to Yahweh.

The merchants will not hoard their money;

instead, they will give it to Yahweh's people, for they will live in his presence,

in order that they can buy food and nice clothes.

Chapter 24

¹Some day Yahweh is going to destroy the earth.

He will devastate it and cause it to become a desert,

and he will scatter its people.

²He will scatter everyone:

priests and common people,

servants and their masters,

maids and their mistresses,

buyers and sellers,

lenders and borrowers,

people who owe money and people who are owed money.

³Nothing that is worth anything will be left on earth;
everything valuable will be destroyed.

That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.

⁴Everything on the earth will dry up and die;
its important people will become weak and unimportant.

⁵The earth has become unacceptable to Yahweh because the people who live on it have disobeyed his laws;
they have rejected the covenant that he intends to last forever.

⁶Therefore, Yahweh will curse the earth;
the people who live on it must be punished because of the sins that they have committed.
They will be destroyed by fire,
and only a few people will remain alive.

⁷The grapevines will wither,
and there will be no grapes to make wine.
All the people who were previously happy will now groan and mourn.

⁸People will no longer play cheerful songs with tambourines,
people will no longer play joyfully on their harps,
and people will no longer shout noisily during their celebrations.

⁹People will no longer sing while they drink wine,
and all their alcoholic drinks will taste bitter.

¹⁰Towns and cities will be desolate;
every house will be locked to prevent thieves from entering, for no one will live in them.

¹¹Mobs will gather in the streets, wanting wine;
no one on the earth will be happy anymore.

¹²Cities will be ruined,
and all their gates will be battered into pieces.

¹³It will be like that all over the earth:
there will only be a few people still alive,
like what happens when workers beat all the olives off a tree and there are only a few left,
or when they harvest the grapes and there are only a few left on the vines.

¹⁴Those in the west will sing with great happiness;

they will declare that Yahweh is very great.

¹⁵Those in the east of Israel will also praise Yahweh;

those along the coastlines of the sea will praise Yahweh, the God the people Israel worship.

¹⁶We will hear people in the most distant places on the earth singing praise to Yahweh, the truly righteous one.

But now, I am very sad.

Weep for me, because I have become thin and weak.

Terrible things are happening!

Treacherous people still betray others everywhere.

¹⁷You people all over the earth,

you will be terrified,

and you will fall into deep pits and traps.

¹⁸Those who try to flee because they are terrified

will fall into deep pits,

and those who climb out of the pits

will be caught by traps.

The sky will split open and torrents of rain will fall;

the foundations of the earth will shake.

¹⁹The earth will split apart and be shattered;

it will shake violently.

²⁰It will be as though the earth will stagger like a drunk;

it will shake like a hammock in a windstorm.

It will collapse and not be able to rise again,

because the guilt of the people who rebel against Yahweh is very great.

²¹At that time, Yahweh will punish the wicked powerful beings in the skies

and the wicked kings on the earth.

²²They will all be gathered together and thrown into a dungeon.

They will be shut in that dungeon,

and later they will be punished.

²³At that time the light of the moon and the sun will be lessened;

it will be as though they are ashamed in the presence of Yahweh,

because he, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will rule gloriously on Mount Zion,

in the presence of all the leaders of his people.

Chapter 25

¹Yahweh, you are my God;

I will honor you and praise you.

You do wonderful things;

you said long ago that you would do those things,

and now you have done them as you said that you would.

²Sometimes you have caused cities to become heaps of rubble,

cities that had strong walls around them.

You have caused palaces in foreign countries to disappear;

they will never be rebuilt.

³Therefore, people in powerful nations will declare that you are very great,

and people in nations whose leaders show mercy to no one will revere you.

⁴Yahweh, you are like a strong tower where poor people can find refuge,

a place where needy people can go when they are distressed.

You are like a place where people can find refuge in a storm

and where they can stay in the shade, out of the hot sun.

People oppress us and show us no mercy,

they are like a storm beating against a wall,

⁵and like the very strong heat in the dry land.

But you cause the noisy cries of people from foreign nations to be quiet.

Like the air cools when a cloud comes overhead,

you stop merciless people from singing songs about how great they are.

⁶Here in Jerusalem Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will prepare a wonderful feast for all the people of the world.

It will be a banquet with plenty of good meat and fine well-aged wine.

⁷People here are sad;

they are so sad that it is like a dark cloud that hangs over them,

like they experience when someone dies.

But Yahweh will enable them to quit being sad.

⁸He will get rid of death forever!

Yahweh our God will cause people to no longer mourn because someone has died.
And he will stop other people insulting and making fun of his land and us his people.
That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it!

⁹At that time, people will proclaim,

“Yahweh is our God!

We trusted in him, and he has rescued us!

Yahweh, in whom we trusted, has done it;

we should rejoice because he has saved us!”

¹⁰Yahweh will protect and bless Jerusalem.

But he will crush the people in the land of Moab;

they will be like straw that is trampled in the manure and left to rot.

¹¹Yahweh will push down the people of Moab;

they will be like a swimmer who pushes down the water with his hands; they will push their hands through the dung but never get out of it.

He will cause them to cease being proud,

and he will show that all the things that they have done are worthless.

¹²He will cause armies to tear down the high walls around the cities of Moab;

they will fall into pieces and lie in the dust.

Chapter 26

¹Some day, people in Judah will sing this song:

“Our city of Jerusalem is strong!

Yahweh protects our city;

He is like a wall that surrounds it.

²Open the gates of the city for people who are righteous;

allow people who faithfully obey Yahweh to enter the city.

³Yahweh, those who trust in you,

those who are determined to never doubt you,

you will enable them to be perfectly peaceful in their inner beings.

⁴So always trust in Yahweh,

because he is forever like a huge rock on top of which we will be safe.

⁵He humbles proud people

and destroys cities whose people are arrogant.

He causes those cities to collapse into the dust.

⁶When that happens, poor and oppressed people will trample on the ruins.

⁷But for the righteous people,

Yahweh, you do what is right;

it is as though you smooth out the paths where they walk.

⁸Yahweh, by obeying your laws

we show that we trust you to help us;

and what we desire in our inner beings is that you will be honored.

⁹All during the nights I desire to know you better,

and in the mornings I still want to be with you.

When you come to judge and punish people who live on the earth

they will learn to do what is right.

¹⁰But your acting kindly toward wicked people does not cause them to do what is good.

Even in places where people do what is right, the wicked people continue to do what is evil,

and they do not realize that you, Yahweh, are great.

¹¹Yahweh, it is as though your fist was raised up ready to strike them,

but they do not realize that.

Show them that you are very eager to help your people.

If your enemies would realize that, they would be ashamed;

make your fire burn them up because they are your enemies.

¹²Yahweh, we desire that you will allow things to go well for us;

all that we have done is what you have enabled us to do.

¹³Yahweh, our God, other masters have ruled over us,

but you are the only one whom we honor.

¹⁴Those who ruled us are now gone; they are dead;

their spirits have left this earth and they will never live again.

You punished those rulers and got rid of them,

and people do not even remember them anymore.

¹⁵Yahweh, you have enabled our nation to become great;

we are more people now, and we have more land,

so we thank you.

¹⁶Yahweh, when we were distressed, we asked you to help us;
when you disciplined us, we could barely speak out any prayer to you.

¹⁷Like pregnant women who writhe and cry out
when they are giving birth,
we suffered very much, too.

¹⁸We were pregnant and had severe pain,
but nothing good resulted from it.
We have not rescued any people or kept their enemies from conquering them,
and those in the world who were our enemies did not fall in battle.

¹⁹But Yahweh's people who have died will become alive again,
their corpses will become alive!
You whose bodies lie in graves, rise and shout joyfully!
His light will be like dew that falls on you, his people who have died,
you who are now in the place where the dead people are;
he will cause you to live again.

²⁰But now, my fellow Israelites, go home
and lock your doors!
Hide for a short time,
until Yahweh is no longer angry.

²¹Listen to this: Yahweh will come from heaven
to punish all the people on the earth for the sins that they have committed.
People will be able to see the blood of those who have been murdered;
everyone will at last know all the crimes of murder that have been committed."

Chapter 27

¹At that time, Yahweh will punish Leviathan,
the swift-moving monster,
that coiling serpent that lives in the sea.
Yahweh will kill it with his sharp, huge, and powerful sword.

²At that time, Yahweh will say,

"You Israelite people, who are like a fruitful vineyard, must sing!

³I will protect you

like a farmer waters his crops carefully in order that they will grow well.

I will guard you day and night, in order that no one harms you.

⁴I am no longer angry with my people;

if any of your enemies try to injure you like briars and thorns injure people,

I will attack them in battle;

I will get rid of them completely,

⁵unless they request me to protect them;

I strongly invite them to make peace with me!"

⁶There will be a time when the descendants of Jacob will prosper like a plant that has good roots;

they will be like trees that bud and blossom and bear a lot of fruit;

what they do will bless all the people in the world.

⁷Has Yahweh punished us Israelites

like he punished our enemies?

Has he punished us as much as he punished them?

⁸No, he has not done that,

but he did punish us Israelite people and exiled us;

we were taken away from our land

as though we were struck by a windstorm from the east.

⁹Yahweh did that in order to punish us for our sins

and remove our guilt.

As a result of our being exiled, all the altars to other gods in Israel will be demolished,

and we will be forgiven for the sins that we have committed.

There will be no more poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah or altars for burning incense to other gods;

they will all be torn down and smashed to bits.

¹⁰The cities that have strong walls around them will be empty;

like the desert, they will have no one living in them.

The houses will be abandoned,

and the streets will be full of weeds.

Calves will eat grass there and lie down there;

they will chew up all the leaves on the trees.

¹¹The Israelite people are like dry branches on a tree;

women break them off and use them to make fires under their cooking pots.

Our Israelite people do not have any sense;

so Yahweh, who created them, will not act mercifully toward them

or be kind to them.

¹²However, there will be a time when Yahweh will gather them together again; he will separate them from the people who have conquered them, like people separate wheat from chaff. He will bring them back to Israel, one by one, from the land between the Euphrates River in the northeast and the brook at the border of Egypt in the southwest. ¹³At that time, a trumpet will be blown very loudly. And those who were exiled to Assyria and Egypt and who almost died there will return to Jerusalem, to worship Yahweh on Zion, his holy hill.

Chapter 28

¹Terrible things will happen to the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel!

It is on a hill above a fertile valley;

the people who live there, who get drunk by drinking too much wine, are very proud;

it is a beautiful and glorious city,

but some day that beauty will disappear like a flower that wilts and dries up.

²Listen to this: Yahweh will cause a great army to attack it.

Their soldiers will be like a huge hailstorm or a very strong wind;

they will be everywhere, like the water of a huge flood,

and they will smash to the ground the buildings in Samaria.

³The people of Samaria are proud,

but everything that the drunks who live there think is wonderful will be trampled on by their enemies.

⁴Yes, Samaria is beautiful, set on a hill above a fertile valley, but that beauty will disappear

like a flower that wilts and dries up.

Whenever someone sees a good fig at the beginning of the season when figs become ripe, he quickly picks and eats it;

similarly, when the enemies of Israel see all the beautiful things in Samaria,

they will quickly conquer the city and take away all those things.

⁵At that time, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will be like a glorious wreath of flowers for us Israelite people

who are still alive after being exiled.

⁶He will cause our judges to want to do what is fair

when they decide people's cases.

He will enable the soldiers who stand at the city gates
to strongly defend the city when our enemies attack it.

⁷But now, our leaders stagger,
and the priests and prophets also stagger
because of drinking a lot of wine and other alcoholic drinks.
They are not able to think right;
they see visions, but they cannot understand what they mean;
they are unable to decide things correctly.

⁸All their tables are covered with their vomit;
filth is everywhere.

⁹Who will he teach so that they can learn about knowledge?
Who will listen to him so that he can teach lessons to them so they can learn?
Does he think that we are like little children who no longer drink milk,
and that we are like babies who, not long ago, were weaned?

¹⁰He continually tells us, 'Do this, do that;'
first he tells us one rule, then another rule,
he tells us only one line at a time."

¹¹So now, Yahweh will need to force them to listen to Assyrians
speaking to them in a language that they do not understand.

¹²Yahweh told his people long ago,
"This is a place where you can rest;
you are exhausted from all your travels through the desert,
but you will be able to rest in this land."

But they refused to pay attention to what he said.

¹³So Yahweh continues to tell the people of Samaria,
one line at a time, "Do this, do that,"
first one rule and then another rule.
But because of their ignoring what God said, they will be attacked and defeated;
they will be wounded and snared and captured.

¹⁴Listen to the word that Yahweh says,

you who rule over the people of Jerusalem,
you who mock and make fun of me!

¹⁵You boast and say,

"We made a promise with death to ensure that the power of death, when it passes over us, it cannot get to us.
We tried to turn our lying words into a shelter in which we could hide.

¹⁶Therefore, Yahweh our Lord says this:

"Listen to this! I am going to place in Jerusalem someone who is like a foundation stone,
he is like a stone that has been tested to determine if it is solid.
He will be like a valuable stone on which it will be safe to build a house;
and whoever trusts in him will never be disappointed.

¹⁷I will test you people of Jerusalem to find out if you will act justly and righteously,
I will measure your character like a carpenter uses a plumb line to determine if a wall is straight and level.
And then the hail will fall! And it will destroy everything you have.
Your shelter will be destroyed because it is built on a foundation of lies,
and the water from the storm will wash your shelter away.

¹⁸I will cancel the covenant that you made with death,
and I will bring to an end the covenant you made with the place where the dead dwell.
But when the vast flood comes, it will pour over you;
and day after day it will pass over you.

¹⁹When the flood comes, it will pass through and over you like the river when it overflows its banks and causes flooding everywhere.

When you finally understand the message of Yahweh, it will cause you to be terrified, not comforted.

For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on, and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in. ²⁰You have heard people say, "Your bed is very short; you will not be able to sleep in it;
your blankets are very narrow; they will not cover you!"

²¹Yahweh will come and cause you to be defeated;
he will do to you like he did to the army of Philistia at Mount Perizim,
and like he did to the Amorites at Gibeon Valley.
What he will do will be very strange and unusual.

²²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has told me that he is going to destroy the entire land.
So do not ridicule what I say anymore,
because if you do that,

he will punish you even more severely.

²³Listen to what I say;

pay attention carefully.

²⁴When a farmer plows some ground, does he never plant seeds?

Does he continue to plow it and never plant anything?

²⁵No, he makes the ground very level,

and then he plants seeds—

caraway seed and cumin and wheat and barley.

He plants each kind of seed in the correct manner. He does not plant one kind of seed in the way that is not right for it.

²⁶He does that because God has taught him the correct way to do it.

²⁷Moreover, the caraway seed is not threshed with a sledge,

nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cumin;

but caraway is beaten with a stick, and the cumin with a rod.

²⁸And grain for baking bread is crushed easily,

so the farmers do not continue to pound it for a long time.

They sometimes cause their horses to pull a cart over it to thresh it,

but doing that does not grind the grain.

²⁹Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

gives us wonderful advice about how to do things; he gives us great wisdom.

So what the farmers do is very smart, but what your leaders are doing is very stupid.

Chapter 29

¹This is a message from Yahweh:

Terrible things will happen to Jerusalem, the city where King David lived.

You people continue to celebrate your festivals each year.

²But I will cause you to experience a great disaster,

and when that happens,

people will weep and lament very much.

Your city will become like an altar to me

where people are burned as sacrifices.

³I will cause your enemies to come and camp all around your city;

they will surround it by building towers
and putting in place other things with which to attack you.

⁴Then you will talk as though you were buried deep in the ground;
it will sound like someone whispering from under the ground,
like a ghost speaking from a grave.

⁵But suddenly your enemies will be blown away like dust;
their armies will disappear
like chaff that is blown away by the wind.

It will happen very suddenly:

⁶Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will come to help you
with thunder and an earthquake and a very loud noise,
with a strong wind and a big storm and a fire that will burn up everything.

⁷Then the armies of all the nations that will be attacking Jerusalem will quickly disappear like a dream in the night.
Those who will be attacking Jerusalem will suddenly vanish.

⁸People who are asleep dream about eating food,
but when they wake up, they are still hungry.
People who are thirsty dream about drinking something,
but when they wake up they are still thirsty.

It will be like that when your enemies come to attack Mount Zion;
they will dream about conquering you, but when they wake up,
they will realize that they have not succeeded.

⁹You people of Jerusalem, be amazed and surprised about this!

Do not believe what I have said!

And continue to be blind about what Yahweh is doing.

You are stupid, but it is not because you have drunk a lot of wine.

You stagger, but not from drinking alcoholic drinks.

¹⁰Because Yahweh has prevented the prophets from understanding and telling you his messages,
it is as though he had made you go fast asleep.

¹¹Yahweh gave me visions; but for you, they are only words on a scroll that is sealed shut. If you give it to those who can read and request they read it, they will say, "We cannot read it because the scroll is sealed." ¹²When you give it to others who cannot read, they will say, "We cannot read it because we do not know how to read."

¹³So the Lord says, "These people pretend to worship me.

They say good things to pretend to honor me,
but they do not think about what I desire.
When they worship me,
all they do is recite rules that people have made and that they have memorized.

¹⁴Therefore, again I will do something to amaze these people;
I will perform many miracles.
And I will show that the people who tell others that they are wise are not really wise,
and I will show that the people who tell others that they are intelligent are not really intelligent.

¹⁵Terrible things will happen to those who try to conceal from me, Yahweh,
the evil things that they plan to do;
they do those deeds in the darkness
and they think, 'Yahweh certainly cannot see us;
he cannot know what we are doing!'

¹⁶They are extremely foolish!
They act as though they were the potters and I were the clay!
Something that was created should certainly never say to the one who made it,
'You did not make me!'
A jar should never say,
'The potter who made me did not know what he was doing!''

¹⁷Soon the forests in Lebanon will become fertile fields,
and abundant crops will grow in those fields,
and that will happen very soon.

¹⁸At that time, deaf people will be able to hear;
they will be able to hear when someone reads from a book;
and blind people will be able to see;
they will be able to see things when it is gloomy and even when it is dark.

¹⁹Yahweh will enable humble people to be very joyful again.
Poor people will rejoice about what the Holy One of Israel has done.

²⁰There will be no more people who ridicule others
and no more arrogant people.
And those who plan to do evil things will be executed.

²¹Those who testify falsely in order to persuade judges to punish innocent people will vanish.

Similar things will happen to those who by lying in court persuade the judges to make unjust decisions.

²²That is why Yahweh, who rescued Abraham, says about the people of Israel,

“My people will no longer be ashamed;

no longer will they show on their faces that they are ashamed.

²³When they see that I have blessed them by giving them many children, and all that I have done for them, they will honor the holy name of the Holy One of Israel,

and they will revere me, the God to whom they, the descendants of Jacob, belong.

²⁴When that happens, those who are not able to think well will think clearly,

and those who complain about what I am doing will accept what I am teaching them.”

Chapter 30

¹Yahweh says, “Terrible things will happen to you, my people who rebel against me.

You make plans, but what you plan is not what I want.

You have made an alliance with the rulers of Egypt,

but you did not ask my Spirit if that was what you should do.

By doing that, you have increased the number of your sins.

²You went to Egypt to ask their rulers for help,

without asking for my advice.

You have trusted in the army of the king of Egypt to protect you;

you have trusted in them

like people sit in the shade to protect themselves from the sun.

³But the result of your trusting in the king of Egypt is that you will be disappointed and disgraced;

because you trust in him, you will be humiliated.

⁴Officials from Judah have gone to the cities of Zoan and Hanes in Egypt to make treaties,

⁵but all those who trust in the king of Egypt will be humiliated,

because that nation will not be able to help you;

the treaty that you have made requesting help from them will be useless;

instead, the result will be that you will be humiliated and disgraced.”

⁶Isaiah received from Yahweh this message about the animals in the southern part of Judah, the desert part:

That area is one where people experience a lot of troubles and difficulties,

an area where there are male and female lions
and various kinds of poisonous snakes.

Caravans go through that area
taking donkeys and camels loaded with valuable goods.

They are taking them to Egypt because they hope that the army of Egypt will protect them,
but it will be useless.

⁷The promises made by the king of Egypt are worthless;
therefore I call Egypt 'Useless Rahab, the sea monster that does nothing.'

⁸Yahweh told me to write on a scroll a message,
in order that it would be a witness to the people of Judah
that would endure forever.

⁹It would remind them that they are deceitful and always rebelling against Yahweh,
and that they refuse to pay attention to what he tells them.

¹⁰They tell the people who see visions from Yahweh,
"Stop seeing visions!"

They tell the prophets,

"Do not reveal to us what is right!

Tell us pleasant things;

do not tell us visions about things that are true!

¹¹Stop doing what you have been doing;
stop telling us what the Holy One of Israel says to us!"

¹²Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says:

"You have rejected my message,

and you are relying on those who oppress and deceive others.

¹³Therefore, the result of your sin of rejecting me will be that you will suddenly experience disasters;
what will happen to you will be like a cracked wall that suddenly collapses on you."

¹⁴You will be smashed like a clay jar is smashed when it is dropped
and shatters completely, with the result that there is not one piece big enough
to sweep out cinders from a stove
or to carry a little bit of water from a well.

¹⁵Yahweh, our God, the Holy One of Israel, also says this:

"I will rescue you from your enemies only if you repent and trust in what I will do for you;
you will be strong only if you quit worrying and trust in me.

But you do not want to do that.

¹⁶You said, 'No, we will escape on horses that the army of Egypt will give us!'

So you will try to escape.

You said, 'We will escape from the army of Assyria by riding on swift horses!'

But those who pursue you will also ride swiftly.

¹⁷As a result, a thousand of you will flee when only one of them pursues you!

When five of their soldiers threaten to kill you,

all of you will flee.

Only a few of you will be left, like a single flagpole on top of a mountain,
or like one single signal flag on a hilltop."

¹⁸But Yahweh wants to act kindly toward you;

he is great because he desires to act mercifully.

Do not forget he is a God who acts justly;

Yahweh is pleased with those who patiently trust in him.

¹⁹You people who live in Jerusalem, some day you will not cry anymore. Yahweh will be kind to you when you call out to him for help. He will answer you as soon as he hears you call. ²⁰Although now Yahweh has brought poverty on you, he, your teacher, will not hide himself from you. He will teach you many things clearly. ²¹And you will hear him speak to you to guide you. Right behind you he will say, "This is the road on which you should walk; walk on this road!" ²²When that happens, you will destroy all your idols that are covered with silver or gold. You will throw them away like you throw away a filthy rag, and you will say to them, "We do not need you anymore!"

²³If you do that, Yahweh will bless you by giving you good rain at the time that you plant your crops. You will have good harvests and plenty of big fields with grass for your cattle to eat. ²⁴After the wind blows away the chaff, the oxen and donkeys that pull the plow over your ground will have good grain to eat. ²⁵At that time, when your enemies have been slaughtered and their towers have collapsed, there will be streams flowing down every hill and mountain in Judah. ²⁶The moon will seem to shine as brightly as the sun, and the sun will seem to shine seven times as brightly as previously. That is what it will be like when Yahweh causes the suffering of his people to cease; it will be as though he is putting bandages on their wounds and healing them.

²⁷It is as though we see Yahweh coming from far away;

he is extremely angry,

and there are thick clouds of smoke around him.

By what he says he shows that he is angry;

what he says is like a devastating fire.

²⁸His breath is like a flood that covers his enemies up to their necks.

He will separate the nations in order to destroy some of them;
it is as though he will put horses' bridles on them so he can lead them away to destruction.

²⁹But his people will sing joyfully

like they sing during the nights when they celebrate a holy festival.

They will be very joyful,

like a large group of his people are joyful when they go up to Mount Zion in Jerusalem,
along with men playing flutes

when they are all going there to worship Yahweh.

He is like a huge rock on top of which we Israelite people are safe.

³⁰And Yahweh will enable us to hear him speaking powerfully.

He will show us that he is very powerful.

We will see him smash his enemies.

Being very angry, he will descend with a big rainstorm and thunder and hail to punish them.

³¹The soldiers of Assyria will be terrified when they hear the voice of Yahweh
and when he strikes them with his rod.

³²And while Yahweh strikes them to punish them,

his people will celebrate by playing tambourines and harps.

It will be as though Yahweh will lift up his powerful hand and defeat the Assyrian army in battle.

³³The Valley of Topheth outside Jerusalem has been prepared for a long time;

it is ready for the king of Assyria;

the funeral pyre for burning his body is wide and high,

and it will be as though Yahweh will light the fire with his breath,

which will come out like a stream of burning sulfur.

Chapter 31

¹Terrible things will happen to those who rely on Egypt to help them,
trusting in their soldiers' horses and their many chariots and their many chariot drivers,
instead of trusting that Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, will help them.

²Yahweh is very wise,

but he also causes people to experience disaster!

And when he decides to do that,

he does not change his mind!

He will strike the wicked people

and all those who help them.

³The soldiers of Egypt that you people of Judah are relying on are humans, not God!

And their horses are only horses; they are not powerful spirits!

So when Yahweh raises his fist

to strike the soldiers of Egypt whom you thought would help you,

he will also strike you who thought that you would be helped,

and you and they will stumble and fall down;

all of you will die together.

⁴But this is what Yahweh said to me:

“When a lion stands and growls over the body of a sheep that he has killed,

even if a large group of shepherds comes to chase away the lion,

even if they shout loudly,

the lion will not be afraid and will not leave.

Similarly, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will come down

to fight my enemies on Mount Zion,

and nothing will stop me.

⁵Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will protect Jerusalem

like a mother bird hovers over the baby birds in her nest.

He will defend the city

and rescue it from its enemies.”

⁶My people, even though you have greatly rebelled against Yahweh, return to him. ⁷When you do that, each of you will throw away the idols that you have made in sin, idols that are covered with silver and gold.

⁸The Assyrian soldiers will be killed,

but not by swords that men use.

They will be destroyed by the sword of God;

and those who are not killed will panic and flee.

And some of them will be captured and forced to become slaves.

⁹Even their very strong soldiers will be terrified;

their leaders will abandon all hope and run away from Yahweh's power!

Yahweh's presence on Mount Zion is like a fire,

like a furnace that blazes in Jerusalem.

This is what Yahweh says about the Assyrian army!

Chapter 32

¹Listen to this! Some day there will be a righteous king,
and his officials will help him to rule justly.

²Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind
and a refuge from the storm.

They will be like streams of water in the desert,
like the shade under a huge rock in a very hot and dry land.

³When that happens, those leaders will enable people who have not understood God's truth to understand it,
and they will enable those who have not paid attention to God's truth to pay attention to it.

⁴Even those who act very hastily will have good sense,
and those who cannot speak well will speak fluently and clearly.

⁵At that time, people who are foolish will no longer be admired,
and scoundrels will no longer be respected.

⁶Foolish people say things that are foolish,
and they plan to do evil things.
Their behavior is disgraceful,
and they say things about Yahweh that are false.

They do not give food to those who are hungry,
and they do not give water to those who are thirsty.

⁷Scoundrels do things that are evil and that deceive people;
they plan to do evil things;
by telling lies in court they cause poor people to have trouble,
even when what the poor people are requesting is fair.

⁸But honorable people plan to do honorable things,
and they do those honorable things, so they succeed.

⁹You women of Jerusalem who think that you are very secure
and think that everything is going well,
listen to what I say!

¹⁰After one year is ended, you who now are not worried about anything will tremble,
because there will be no grapes for you to harvest
and no other crops to harvest.

¹¹So tremble now, you women who are not worried about anything!
Take off your fancy clothes and put rough sackcloth around your waists.

¹²You will wail because you are grieving about what will happen in your fertile fields and to your fruitful grapevines,
¹³because only thorns and thistles will grow in your soil.

Your houses where you had joyful parties and your city where you have been happy will be gone.

¹⁴The king's palace will be empty;
there will be no people in the city that now is very noisy.
Wild donkeys will walk around and flocks of sheep will eat grass
in the empty forts and watchtowers.

¹⁵It will be like that until God pours his Spirit out on us from heaven.
When that happens, the deserts will become fertile fields,
and abundant crops will grow in those fertile fields.

¹⁶People will act justly in those desert areas,
and people will act righteously in those fertile fields.

¹⁷The result of their acting righteously will be that there will be peace,
the land will be tranquil, and people will be secure forever.

¹⁸My people will live in their homes peacefully, and safely, and calmly,
in places of rest.

¹⁹Even if a severe hailstorm knocks down the trees in the forest,
and all the buildings in the city are blown down,

²⁰Yahweh will greatly bless you;
you will plant seeds in fields alongside the streams
and there will be abundant crops.
Your donkeys and cattle will easily find grass to eat when you send them out into pasture.

Chapter 33

¹Terrible things will happen to you people of Assyria!
You have destroyed others,

but you have not been destroyed yet.

You have betrayed others,

but you have not been betrayed yet.

When you stop destroying others,

others will destroy you.

When you stop betraying others,

others will betray you.

²Yahweh, act kindly toward us,

because we have patiently waited for you to help us.

Enable us to be strong every day,

and rescue us when we have troubles.

³Our enemies run away when they hear your voice.

When you stand up and show that you are powerful, the people of all nations flee.

⁴And after our enemies have been defeated,

we, your people, will take away all our enemies' possessions,

like caterpillars and locusts strip off all the leaves of plants.

⁵Yahweh is greater than anyone else, and he lives in heaven,

and he will rule justly and righteously in Jerusalem.

⁶When that happens, he will enable you to live securely;

he will fully protect your possessions,

he will enable you to be wise and to know all that you need to know;

and revering Yahweh will be like a valuable treasure that he will give to you.

⁷But now, look, our messengers are crying out in the streets;

our ambassadors have gone to other countries to make peace treaties,

but they will cry bitterly because they will not succeed.

⁸No one travels on our roads.

The leaders of Assyria have broken their peace treaty with us;

they despise the people who made those treaties,

and they do not respect anyone.

⁹The land of Judah is dry and barren.

The cedar trees in Lebanon are drying up and decaying.

The Plain of Sharon along the coast is now a desert plain.

There are no more leaves on the trees in the areas of Bashan and Carmel.

¹⁰Yahweh says, "Now I will arise and show that I deserve for everyone to honor me.

¹¹You people of Assyria make plans that are as useless as chaff and straw.

Your breath will become a fire that will burn you up.

¹²Your people will be burned until only ashes remain,

like thornbushes are cut down and burned up.

¹³You people who live far away and you people who live nearby,

pay attention to what I have done and realize that I am very powerful."

¹⁴The sinners in Jerusalem will tremble because they are very afraid;

godless people will be terrified.

They say, "None of us can remain alive because this fire is burning everything;

it is like the fire on Yahweh's altar that will burn forever!"

¹⁵Those who act honestly and say what is right,

those who do not try to become rich by forcing money from people,

those who do not try to get bribes,

those who refuse to listen to people who are planning to murder someone,

those who do not join others who urge them to do what is wrong,

¹⁶they are the people who will live safely;

they will find places to be safe in the caves in the mountains.

They will have plenty of food

and water.

¹⁷You people of Judah will see the king wearing all his beautiful robes,

and you will see that he rules a land that extends far away.

¹⁸When you see that, you will think about when you were previously terrified,

and you will say, "The officers of Assyria who counted the tax money that we were forced to pay to them have disappeared!

Those men who counted our towers are gone!

¹⁹Those arrogant people who spoke a language that we could not understand are no longer here!"

²⁰At that time, you will see Mount Zion, the place where we celebrate our festivals;

You will see that Jerusalem has become a place that is calm and safe.

It will be secure,
like a tent that cannot be moved because its ropes are tight
and its stakes are firmly in the ground.

²¹Yahweh will be our mighty God;
he will be like a mighty river that will protect us
because our enemies will not be able to cross it;
no one will be able to row across it
and no warships will be able to sail across it.

²²Yahweh is our judge;
he is the one who gives us laws,
and he is our king.
He will rescue us.

²³The ropes on our enemies' boats will hang loose,
their masts will not be fastened firmly,
and their sails will not be spread out.
The treasures that they have seized will be divided among us, God's people,
and even lame people among us will get some.

²⁴And the people in Jerusalem will no longer say, "We are sick,"
because Yahweh will forgive the sins that have been committed by the people who live there.

Chapter 34

¹You people of all nations, come near and listen;
pay careful attention.
I want the world and everything that is in it to hear what I say.

²Yahweh is angry with the people of all nations;
he is furious with all their armies.
He has decided that they must be destroyed,
and he will slaughter them.

³Their corpses will not be buried,
and as a result their bodies will stink,
and the mountains will collapse because of their blood.

⁴The sky will disappear like a scroll that is rolled up and thrown away.

Stars will fall from the sky

like withered leaves fall from grapevines,

or like shriveled figs fall from fig trees.

⁵When Yahweh has finished his work of destroying objects in the sky,

he will punish the people of Edom,

the people group that he has said must be destroyed.

⁶It is as though Yahweh will have a sword that is covered with blood and fat—

the blood of lambs and goats

and the fat of the kidneys of rams to be sacrificed.

It is as though Yahweh will offer a sacrifice in Bozrah

and kill many people in other cities in Edom.

⁷Even wild oxen will be killed,

as well as young calves and big bulls.

The ground will be soaked with blood,

and the dirt will be covered with the fat of those animals.

⁸That will be the time when Yahweh gets revenge

for what those people did to the people of Judah.

⁹The streams in Edom will be full of burning pitch,

and the ground will be covered with burning sulfur and burning pitch.

¹⁰Yahweh will never finish punishing Edom with fire;

the smoke will rise forever.

No one will ever live in that land,

and no one will even travel through it.

¹¹Ravens and various kinds of owls and small animals will live there.

Yahweh will measure that land carefully;

he will measure it to decide where to cause chaos and destruction.

¹²There will be no more princes;

the people who have authority will have no kingdom to rule; the princes will disappear.

¹³The deserted palaces and fortified buildings will be full of thorns and thistles.

The ruins will be places for jackals and ostriches to live.

¹⁴Animals that live in the desert and hyenas will be there,
and wild goats will bleat to each other.

There will also be creatures that roam around at night and rest there.

¹⁵Owls will make their nests there and lay their eggs in the nests;
and when the eggs hatch, the mother birds will cover them with their wings.
There will also be hawks there,
each with its mate.

¹⁶If you read what is written in the book that contains messages from Yahweh, you will find out what he will do to Edom.

All of those animals and birds will be there,
and each one will have a mate,
because that is what Yahweh has promised,
and his spirit will cause them all to gather there.

¹⁷He has decided what parts of the land of Edom each will live in,
and those are the places where each bird or animal will live.
Their descendants will possess those areas forever,
throughout all generations.

Chapter 35

¹Some day, it will be as though the desert and other very dry areas are glad;
the desert will rejoice and flowers will blossom.

Like the rose,

²the desert will produce flowers abundantly;
it will be as though everything is rejoicing and singing!

The deserts will become as beautiful as the trees in Lebanon,
as fertile as the plains of the Sharon and the area of Carmel.

There people will see the glory of Yahweh;
they will see that he is magnificent.

³So encourage those who are tired and weak.

⁴Say to those who are afraid,
"Be strong and do not be afraid,
because our God is going to come to get revenge on his enemies;

he will pay them back for what they have done,
and he will rescue you.”

⁵When he does that, he will enable blind people to see
and enable deaf people to hear.

⁶Lame people will leap like deer,
and those who have been unable to speak will sing joyfully.
Water will gush out from springs in the desert,
and streams will flow in the desert.

⁷The very hot and dry ground will become a pool of water,
and springs will provide water for the dry land.
Grass and reeds and papyrus will grow in places where the jackals lived previously.

⁸There will be a highway through that land;
it will be called ‘the Holy Highway.’
People who are not acceptable to God will not walk on that road;
it will be only for those who conduct their lives as God wants them to,
and no wicked fools will walk on that road.

⁹There will not be any lions there
or any other dangerous animals along that road.
Only those whom Yahweh has set free will walk on it.

¹⁰Those whom Yahweh has freed will return to Jerusalem;
they will sing as they enter the city,
and they will be extremely joyful forever.
No longer will they be sad or mourn;
they will be completely joyful and glad.

Chapter 36

¹When King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost fourteen years, King Sennacherib of Assyria came with his army to attack the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They did not conquer Jerusalem, but they conquered all the other cities. ²Then the king of Assyria sent a large army with some of his important officials from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they stood alongside the aqueduct in which water flows into the upper pool into Jerusalem, near the road to the field where the women wash clothes. ³The Israelite officials who went out of the city to talk with them were Hilkiah’s son Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna the king’s secretary, and Asaph’s son Joah, who wrote down the government decisions.

⁴Then one of Sennacherib's important officials told them to take a message to Hezekiah

from the king of Assyria, the great king. In the message, the king said to the people of Jerusalem, "What are you trusting in to rescue you? ⁵You say that you have weapons to fight us and that some other nation has promised to help you, but that is only talk. Who do you think will help you to rebel against my soldiers from Assyria? ⁶Listen to me! You are relying on the army of Egypt. But that is like when a man tries to walk while leaning on a broken reed for a walking stick. But it would pierce the hand of anyone who would lean on it! That is what the king of Egypt is like for anyone who relies on him for help. ⁷But perhaps you will say to me that you are relying on Yahweh your God to help you. In that case, I would answer that Yahweh is the one whom Hezekiah insulted by tearing down his high places and altars and forcing everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to worship only in front of the altar in Jerusalem."

⁸The Assyrian official talking in front of the city continued: "So I suggest that you make a deal with my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, but I do not think that you can find two thousand of your own men who can ride on them! ⁹You are expecting the king of Egypt to send chariots and men riding horses to assist you. But they certainly would not be able to resist even the most insignificant official in the army of Assyria!

¹⁰Furthermore, do not think that we have come here to attack and destroy this land without Yahweh's orders! It is Yahweh himself who told us to come here and destroy this land!"

¹¹Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the official from Assyria, "Please speak to us in your Aramaic language, because we understand it. Do not speak to us in our Hebrew language, because the people who are standing on the wall will understand it and become frightened."

¹²But the official replied, "Do you think that my master sent me to say these things only to you, and not to the people standing on the wall? If you reject this message, the people in this city will soon need to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, just as you will, because you will have nothing else to eat. "

¹³Then the official stood up and shouted in the Hebrew language to the people sitting on the wall. He said, "Listen to this message from the great king, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴He says, 'Do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you! He will not be able to rescue you! ¹⁵Do not allow him to persuade you to trust in Yahweh, saying that Yahweh will rescue you, and that the army of the king of Assyria will never capture this city!

¹⁶Do not pay attention to what Hezekiah says! This is what the king of Assyria says: "Come out of the city and surrender to me. If you do that, I will arrange for each of you to drink the wine from your own grapevines and to eat figs from your own trees, and to drink water from your own well. ¹⁷You will be able to do that until we come and take you to a land that is like your land—a land where there is grain to make bread and vineyards to produce grapes for making new wine and, where we make plenty of bread."

¹⁸Do not allow Hezekiah to trick you by saying, "Yahweh will rescue us." The gods that people of other nations worship have never rescued any of them from the power of the king of Assyria! ¹⁹Why were the gods of Hamath and Arpad cities, and the gods of Sepharvaim unable to rescue Samaria from my power? ²⁰No, no god of any nation which our armies have attacked has been able to rescue their people from me. So why do you think that Yahweh will rescue you people of Jerusalem from my power?"

²¹But the Hebrew soldiers who were listening were silent. No one said anything, because King Hezekiah had commanded them, "When the official from Assyria talks to you, do not answer him."

²²Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah returned to Hezekiah with their clothes torn because they were extremely distressed. They told him what the official from Assyria had said.

Chapter 37

¹When King Hezekiah heard what they reported, he tore his clothes and put on clothes made of rough sackcloth because he was very distressed. Then he went into the temple of Yahweh and prayed. ²Then he sent Eliakim, Shebna, and the older priests, who were also wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, to talk to Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz. ³They told him, "Say this to Isaiah: 'King Hezekiah says that this is a day when we have great distress. Other nations are insulting and shaming us. We are like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby, but she does not have the strength that she needs to do it. ⁴But perhaps Yahweh our God has heard what the official from Assyria said. Perhaps God knows that the king of Assyria has sent his official to insult him, the all-powerful God. Perhaps Yahweh will punish the king of Assyria for what he said. And I, Hezekiah, request that you pray for the few of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem.'"

⁵After those men gave Isaiah that message, ⁶he told them to say to the king that Yahweh says: "Those lackeys from the king of Assyria have said evil things about me. But do not let them worry you. ⁷Listen to this: I will make Sennacherib hear some news from his own country that will worry him very much. So he will go back there, and I will make other men to assassinate him with their swords."

⁸The official from Assyria learned that his king and the army of Assyria had left the city of Lachish and were now attacking Libnah, a nearby city. So the official left Jerusalem and went to Libnah to report to the king what had happened in Jerusalem.

⁹Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading his army to attack them. So he sent other messengers to Hezekiah with a letter. In the letter he wrote this to Hezekiah:

¹⁰"Do not allow your god, on whom you are relying, to deceive you by promising that he will keep my army from capturing Jerusalem." ¹¹You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria before me did to all the other countries; our armies destroyed them completely. So you really do not think that you will escape from me, do you? ¹²Did the gods of those nations rescue them? Did they rescue the region of Gozan, or the cities of Haran and Rezeph in northern Aram, or the people of the region of Eden in the city of Tel Assar? ¹³What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of the cities of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did their gods rescue them?"

¹⁴Hezekiah received the letter that the messengers gave him, and he read it. Then he went up to the temple and spread out the letter in front of Yahweh. ¹⁵Then Hezekiah prayed this: ¹⁶"Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, the God to whom we Israelites belong, you are seated on your throne above the statues of the cherubim, above the sacred chest. Only you are truly God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the sky. ¹⁷So, Yahweh, please listen to what I am saying, and look at what is happening! And listen to what Sennacherib has said to insult you, the all-powerful God!

¹⁸Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many nations and ruined their land. ¹⁹And they have thrown all the idols of those nations into fires and burned them. But they were not really gods. They were only idols made of wood and stone, and that is why they were able to be destroyed. ²⁰So now, Yahweh our God, please rescue us from the power of the king of Assyria, in order that the people in all the kingdoms of the world may know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is truly God."

²¹Then Isaiah sent a message to tell Hezekiah that Yahweh, whom the Israelites worshiped, said this to him: "Because you prayed about what King Sennacherib of Assyria said, ²²this is what I say to him:

'The people of Jerusalem despise you and make fun of you.

They will wag their heads to mock you while you flee from here.

²³Who do you think you have been despising and ridiculing?

Who do you think you were shouting at?

Who do you think you were looking at very proudly?

It was I, the Holy One whom the Israelites worship!

²⁴The messengers whom you sent made fun of me.

You said, "With my many chariots I have gone to the highest mountains,
to the highest mountains in Lebanon.

We have cut down its tallest cedar trees
and its nicest pine trees.

We have been to the most distant peaks
and to its densest forests.

²⁵We have dug wells in many countries and drunk water from them.

And by marching through the streams of Egypt,
we dried them all up!"

²⁶But I reply to him, 'Have you never heard that long ago I determined those things;

I planned it long ago,
and now I have been causing it to occur.

I planned that your army would destroy cities
and cause them to become piles of rubble.

²⁷The people in those cities have no power,
and as a result they are dismayed and discouraged.

They are as frail as grass and plants in the fields,
as frail as grass that grows on the roofs of houses
and is scorched by the hot east wind.

²⁸But I know everything about you;

I know when you are in your house and when you go outside;

I also know that you are raging against me.

²⁹So because you have raged against me

and because I have heard you speak very proudly,

it will be as though I will put a hook in your nose

and an iron bit in your mouth in order that I can take you where I wish,

and I will force you to return to your own country,

on the same road on which you came here, without conquering Jerusalem."

³⁰"This will prove to you, Hezekiah that it is I, Yahweh, who will make all this happen:

This year, you will eat only the crops that grow by themselves,
and next year the same thing will happen.

But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them;
you will take care of your vineyards and eat the grapes.

³¹You people who are still here in Judah,
will be strong and prosper again.

³²A small number of my people will survive,
and they will spread out from Jerusalem.

That will happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is desiring very much to accomplish it."

³³"This is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria:

'His armies will not enter Jerusalem;
they will not even shoot a single arrow into it.

His soldiers will not bring one shield up to Jerusalem,
and they will not build high mounds of dirt against the walls of the city
to enable them to attack the city.

³⁴Instead, their king will return to his own country
on the same road on which he came here.

He will not enter this city!

That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!

³⁵For the sake of my own reputation and because of what I promised King David, who served me well,
I will defend this city and prevent it from being destroyed."

³⁶That night, an angel from Yahweh went out to where the army of Assyria had set up their tents and killed 185,000 of their soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw that there were corpses everywhere. ³⁷Then King Sennacherib left and returned home to Nineveh in Assyria and stayed there.

³⁸One day, when he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his two sons, Adrammelek and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. Then they escaped and went to the region of Ararat northwest of Nineveh. And another of Sennacherib's sons, Esarhaddon, became the king of Assyria.

Chapter 38

¹About that time, Hezekiah became very ill and was close to dying. So Isaiah went to see him and gave him this message: "This is what Yahweh says: 'You should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die because you will not recover from this illness. You are going to die'"

²Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed this: ³"Yahweh, do not forget that I have always served you faithfully with all my inner being, and I have done things that pleased you!" Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly.

⁴Then Yahweh gave Isaiah this message: ⁵"Go back to Hezekiah and tell him that this is what I, the God to whom your ancestor King David belonged, say: 'I have heard what you prayed, and I have seen you crying. So listen: I will enable you to live fifteen years more. ⁶And I will rescue you and this city from the power of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.

⁷And this is what I will do to prove to you that I will do what I have just now promised. ⁸I will cause the shadow of the sun to move ten steps backward on the stairs that were built by King Ahaz.'" So the shadow of the sun on the stairs moved backward ten steps.

⁹When King Hezekiah was almost well again, he wrote this:

¹⁰I said to myself, "In the middle of my life I am about to walk through the gates of death, and Yahweh is taking from me the rest of my years.

¹¹I said, "I will not see Yahweh again

in this world where people are alive.

I will not see my friends again,

or be with others who now are alive in this world.

¹²It is as if my life had been taken away

like a tent whose pegs have been pulled up by a shepherd and taken away.

I have to roll up my life like a weaver,

like a piece of cloth that a weaver cuts and rolls up, Yahweh has cut off my life."

Between morning and evening he will kill me off.

¹³I waited patiently all during the night,

but my pain was as though I were being torn apart by lions.

Between morning and evening he will kill me off.

¹⁴I was delirious; I chirped like a swift or a swallow

and moaned like a dove.

My eyes became tired looking up toward heaven for help.

I cried out, 'Yahweh, help me, because I am distressed!'

¹⁵But there was really nothing that I could say and ask him to reply to me,

because it was Yahweh who sent this illness.

So now I will live humbly during my remaining years

because I am very anguished within myself.

¹⁶Yahweh, the sufferings that you give are good,

because what you do and what you say bring new life and health to me.

And you have restored me
and allowed me to continue to live!

¹⁷Truly, my suffering was good for me;
you loved me,
and as a result you have rescued me from dying
and have also forgiven all my sins.

¹⁸Dead people cannot praise you;
they cannot sing to praise you.
Those who have descended to their graves
cannot expect you to faithfully do things for them.

¹⁹Only people who are still alive, like I am, can praise you.
Fathers tell their children how you are faithful,
and if I remain alive, I will do the same thing.

²⁰Yahweh will fully heal me,
so we will sing praise to him
while others praise him playing musical instruments.
We will do that every day of our lives in the temple of Yahweh."

²¹Isaiah had previously said to Hezekiah's servants, "Prepare an ointment from mashed figs, and spread it on his boil, and then he will recover." So they did that, and Hezekiah recovered.

²²And Hezekiah had previously asked, "What will Yahweh do to prove that I will recover and be able to go to his temple?"

Chapter 39

¹Soon after that, Baladan's son Marduk-Baladan, the king of Babylon, heard a report that Hezekiah had been very sick but that he had recovered. So he wrote some letters and gave them to some messengers to take to Hezekiah, along with a gift. ²When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. Then he showed them everything that was in his treasure houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the nice-smelling olive oil. He also took them to see the place where they kept their soldiers' weapons, and he showed them the other valuable things that were in the storehouses. Hezekiah showed them everything that was in the palace or in other places.

³Then Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "Where did those men come from, and what did they want?"
He replied, "They came from the far away land of Babylon."

⁴Isaiah asked him, "What did they see in your palace?"

Hezekiah replied, "They saw everything. I showed them absolutely everything that I own—all my valuable things."

⁵Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from Yahweh, commander of the angel armies: ⁶There will be a time when everything in your palace, all the valuable things that your ancestors stored there up until the present time, will be carried away to Babylon. Yahweh says that there will be nothing left. ⁷Furthermore, some of your sons will be forced to go to Babylon. They will be castrated in order that they can become servants in the palace of the king of Babylon."

⁸Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, "The message from Yahweh that you have given to me is good." He said that because he was thinking, "Even if that happens, there will be peace and safety here during the time that I am alive."

Chapter 40

¹Our God says, "Encourage my people!

Encourage them!

²Speak kindly to the people of Jerusalem;

tell them that their suffering is ended

Yahweh has forgiven them for the sins that they have committed.

He has fully punished them for their sins."

³Someone is shouting,

"In the desert plain make the way straight for Yahweh to come to you;

make a smooth road for our God.

⁴Fill in the valleys;

flatten every hill and every mountain.

Make the uneven ground smooth,

and make the rough places smooth.

⁵If you do that, it will become known that Yahweh is glorious,

and all people will realize it at the same time.

Those things will surely happen because it is Yahweh who has said it."

⁶Someone said to me, "Shout!"

I replied, "What should I shout?"

He replied, "Shout that people are like grass;

their faithfulness fades as quickly as flowers in the field.

⁷Grass withers and flowers dry up

when Yahweh causes a hot wind from the desert to blow on them.

And all people are like that.

⁸The grass withers and the flowers dry up,

but what our God promises will last forever.”

⁹All of you who bring good news to Zion,
shout it from the high mountain!

Every one of you who brings good news to the people who live in Jerusalem,
shout out loud the message you have to tell!

Shout it out! Do not be afraid!

Say to the people living in the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!

¹⁰Yahweh your God will be coming with power,
he will rule powerfully.

When he comes, he will bring with him the people whom he has freed from being slaves in Babylon.

¹¹He will take care of his people
like a shepherd takes care of his sheep,
and carries the young lambs in his arms.

He carries them close to his chest
and he gently leads the female sheep
that are nursing their young lambs.

¹²There is no one like Yahweh!
Who else has measured the water in the oceans in the palm of his hand?
Who else has measured the sky?
Who else knows how much soil is in the earth?
Who else has weighed the mountains and hills on scales?

¹³And who else can advise Yahweh?
Who can teach him or advise him what he should do?

¹⁴Has Yahweh ever consulted anyone else to get advice?
Does he need someone to tell him what is right to do and how to act justly?

¹⁵Yahweh considers that the nations are as insignificant as one drop from a bucket full of water.
They are as insignificant as dust on scales.
He is able to weigh islands
as though they weighed no more than specks of dust.

¹⁶There would be not enough wood from all the trees in Lebanon
to make a suitable fire for sacrificing animals to him,

and there are not enough animals in Lebanon to offer as sacrifices to him.

¹⁷The nations of the world are completely insignificant to him;
he considers that they are worthless and less than nothing.

¹⁸So to whom can you compare God?

What image resembles him?

¹⁹Can you compare him to an idol that is made in a mold,
and then is covered with a thin sheet of gold
and decorated with silver chains?

²⁰A man who is poor cannot buy silver or gold for his idol;
so he selects a piece of wood that will not rot,
and he gives it to a craftsman
to carve an idol that will not fall over!

²¹Have you not heard this?

Do you not understand it?

Are you unable to hear what God said long ago—
messages that he gave before he created the earth?

²²God sits on his throne above the earth,
and the people on the earth below seem to be as small as grasshoppers.
He spreads out the sky like a curtain;
it is like a tent for him to live in.

²³He causes kings to have no more power,
and he causes the rulers to be worth nothing.

²⁴They start to rule, like small plants start to grow and form roots;
but then he gets rid of them
as though they withered when he blew on them,
like chaff that is blown away by the wind.

²⁵The Holy One asks,

“To whom will you compare me?
Is anyone equal to me?”

²⁶Look up toward the sky:
consider who created all the stars.

Yahweh created them, and at night he causes them to appear;
he calls each one by its name.

Because he is extremely powerful,
all of the stars are there when he calls out their names.

²⁷You people of Israel, why do you complain that Yahweh does not see the troubles that you are experiencing?
Why do you say that he does not act fairly toward you?

²⁸Have you never heard
and have you never understood
that Yahweh is the everlasting God?
He is the one who created the earth, even the most distant places on the earth.
He never becomes weak or weary,
and no one can find out how much he understands.

²⁹He strengthens those who feel weak and tired.

³⁰Even youths become faint and weary,
and young men will fall when they are exhausted.

³¹But those who trust in Yahweh will become strong again;
it will be as though they will soar as eagles do.
They will run for a long time and not become weary;
they will walk long distances and not faint.

Chapter 41

¹Yahweh says, "You people who live on islands in the ocean,
be silent in front of me while I ask you some questions!
Then you can be courageous and talk to me.
We will meet together and decide which one of us is right.

²Who has raised up this king to come from the east?
He is the one who does what is right with every step. He hands nations over to him and he defeats them,
and he tramples their kings under his feet.
He cuts their enemies and they are destroyed so they are like the dust,
and his army shoots them with bows and arrows so that they are like the chaff when the wind blows.

³Even though they are in danger, they go very swiftly as

they pursue their enemies, and nothing stops them.

⁴Who has enabled rulers to do mighty deeds like that?

Who has done that throughout all generations?

It is I, Yahweh!

I was the first one to do things like that, and I will be the last one to do them.

⁵People who live on islands in the ocean are afraid while they watch.

People in remote areas tremble and gather together.

⁶They encourage each other and say to each other,

'Be strong!'

⁷The woodworkers encourage those who make things from gold,

and the men who flatten metal encourage those who hammer it on an anvil.

They all say, 'The idol has been well made!'

Then they carefully nail down the idol in order that it will not topple over!"

⁸Yahweh continues to say, "You people of Israel are my servants;

you are descendants of Jacob, whom I chose;

you are descendants of Abraham, who I said was my friend.

⁹I summoned you from very distant places on the earth,

and I said, 'I want you to serve me.'

I have chosen you,

and I will not reject you.

¹⁰Do not be afraid,

because I will be with you.

Do not be discouraged, because I am your God.

I will enable you to be strong, and I will help you;

I will hold you up with my powerful arm by which I will rescue you, and I will be completely right to do so!

¹¹It is certain that all those who are angry with you Israelite people will be disgraced.

Those who oppose you will be wiped out;

they will all die.

¹²If you search for those who tried to conquer you,

you will not find them,

because they will all disappear.

Those who attacked you
will not exist anymore,

¹³because it will be as though I will hold you up by your right hand.

I am Yahweh, your God,
and I say to you, 'Do not be afraid,
because I will help you.'

¹⁴Although others have treated you people of Israel like worms,
do not be afraid of your enemies,
because I will help you!"

This is what Yahweh solemnly says—the one who rescues you,
the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵He continues to say, "I will cause you to be like a new threshing sledge, very sharp and two-edged.
You will tear your enemies to bits
causing them to be like bits of chaff on the mountains.

¹⁶You will toss them up into the air,
and a strong wind will blow them away.

When that happens, you will rejoice about what I have done for you;
you will praise me, Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁷When poor and needy people need water and they have no water,
and their tongues are very dry because they are very thirsty,
I, Yahweh, will come and help them.

I, the God to whom you Israelite people belong, will never abandon them.

¹⁸I will cause rivers to flow for them on the barren hills.

I will give them fountains in the valleys.

I will fill the desert with pools of water.

Water from springs will flow into rivers,
and the rivers will flow across the dry ground.

¹⁹I will plant cedars, acacia, and myrtle, in the wilderness—
and olive trees I will plant in the desert plain— cypresses, pines, and boxtrees all together.

²⁰I will do that in order that people who see it will think about it, and they will know and understand
that it is I, Yahweh, who has done it;

it is what I, the Holy One of Israel, have done.

²¹I, Yahweh, the king of Israel am speaking to you nations:

Come and tell me what your idols can do for you! Argue your best in defense of them.

²²Bring them here to tell us what is going to happen!

Ask them to tell us what things happened long ago,
in order that we may think about those things,
and learn if those things that they predicted really happened.

Or ask them to tell us about the future,
in order for us to know what will happen.

²³Yes, those idols should tell us what will happen in the future.

If they do that, we will know that they are really gods.

Tell them to do something—either something good or something bad!

Tell them to do something that will cause us to be amazed and afraid!

²⁴But that is impossible, because idols are absolutely worthless;
they can do nothing,
and I detest those who decide to worship idols.”

²⁵“But I have incited a ruler who will come with his army from the north.

I have summoned him to come from his country, which is east of Israel,
and he will call on me for help.

I will enable his army to conquer other rulers;
they will trample those leaders like a man who makes clay pots first tramples the clay.

²⁶Who told you people long ago that this would happen?

Who predicted it, with the result that we can say, “What he predicted was correct!”?

No one else said that it would happen.

²⁷I was the first one to say to the people of Jerusalem:

‘Listen to this! I have appointed a messenger to tell good news to you!’

²⁸None of your idols told you that.

And when I asked them questions, none of them was able to give me any answers.

²⁹Think about it: Those idols are all useless, worthless things.

They are as meaningless as the wind.”

Chapter 42

¹Yahweh says, "I want you people to know about my servant, whom I encourage.

I have chosen him, and I am pleased with him.

I have given him my Spirit,

and he will make certain that all the people groups do what is right.

²He will not show his power by shouting

or by talking very loudly.

³He will not get rid of anyone who is weak like a smashed reed,

and he will not end the life of anyone who is helpless, like an oil lamp about to stop burning.

He will faithfully make sure that judges decide cases justly.

⁴He will not become exhausted or discouraged all during the time that he is causing things to be done justly throughout the earth.

Even people living on the islands in the oceans will confidently wait for him to teach them his laws."

⁵Yahweh our God created the sky

and spread it out.

He also created the earth and everything on it.

He gives breath to all the people on the earth and causes them to live.

And he is the one who says to his special servant,

⁶"I, Yahweh, have chosen you

to show people that I always act righteously.

I will grasp your hand and protect you,

and I will present you to my Israelite people

to be the one who will put into effect my covenant with them.

You will be like a light to the other nations.

⁷For you will enable blind people to see,

you will free those who are in prison

and release those who are in dark dungeons.

⁸I am Yahweh; that is my name.

I will not allow anyone else to receive the honor that only I deserve.

And I will not allow others to praise idols, for they should praise only me.

⁹Everything that I have prophesied has happened,

and now I will tell about other things that will happen.

I will tell you things that will happen before they happen.”

¹⁰Sing a new song to Yahweh!

Sing to praise him throughout the world!

All you people who sail across the oceans, and all you creatures that live in the oceans,

and all you people who live on islands far away, sing!

¹¹You people who live in towns in the desert, sing loudly!

You people who live in the region of Kedar in the north of Arabia, you rejoice also!

You people in the city of Sela in Edom, you also should sing joyfully;

shout to praise him from the tops of your mountains!

¹²Even people who live on distant islands should honor Yahweh

and sing to praise him.

¹³It will be as though Yahweh will march out like a mighty soldier;

he will show that he is very angry.

He will shout a battle cry,

and then he will defeat all his enemies.

¹⁴He will say, “I have remained silent for a long time;

I have restrained myself from doing what I need to do.

But now, like a woman who is giving birth to a baby, I will cry out and gasp and pant.

¹⁵I will level off the hills and mountains,

and I will cause all the plants and trees to dry up.

I will cause the rivers to become small streams, and little islands will appear in them,

and I will cause all the pools to become dry.

¹⁶My people who have been taken into exile are like blind people,

but I will lead them along a road on which they have not walked before,

on a road that they have not seen before.

They have felt very helpless, as though they were walking in the darkness,

but I will take away that darkness

and I will make smooth the road that is in front of them.

Those are the things that I will do for them;

I will not abandon them.

¹⁷But those who trust in carved idols,
and say to images, 'You are our gods,'
will be completely humiliated."

¹⁸You Israelite people who have acted toward God like deaf people, listen to what Yahweh says!
"You who have been like blind people, look!

¹⁹No people are as blind as my people, who should have been serving me.
No people are as much like deaf people as the Israelites, who should have been my messengers.
No people are as much like blind people as those whom I chose to serve me in a covenant.

²⁰You see and know what are the right things to do, but you do not do them.
You hear what I say to you, but you do not pay attention."

²¹Because Yahweh is righteous,
he has honored his glorious laws.

²²But armies have destroyed Jerusalem and have completely plundered all the valuable things,
and they have captured Yahweh's people
and taken them away and put them in prison.
They have been captured easily,
because there was no one to protect them;
there was no one to say that they should be allowed to return home.

²³Who among you will listen carefully to these things?
Who will pay attention from now on?

²⁴Who allowed the valuable possessions of the people of Israel to be stolen?
It was Yahweh, because he is the one against whom we had sinned;
we did not conduct our lives like he wanted us to,
and we did not obey his laws.

²⁵Therefore he was extremely angry with us,
and he caused our soldiers to be destroyed in battles.
It was as though he had lit a fire around us,
but we did not understand what he was trying to tell us.
His anger with us was like a fire that would burn us up,
but we did not pay attention.

Chapter 43

¹But now, you people of Israel, listen to Yahweh, the one who established your nation.

The one who caused you to become a nation says this:

“Do not be afraid,

because I have rescued you.

I have called you by your name, in order that you may belong to me. Now you are mine.

²When you experience dangerous situations,

and you have hardships as terrible as deep rivers to cross,

I will be with you.

When you have very painful troubles, as painful as fire,

you will be able to endure them, and they will not hurt you,

³because I am Yahweh, your God,

the Holy One of Israel, the one who rescues you.

I will sacrifice Egypt in your place;

and Ethiopia and Seba exchange for you.

⁴I will cause other countries to be conquered instead of your country;

I will trade them for you,

in order that you will not be killed,

because you are very precious to me

and because I love you.

⁵Do not be afraid, because I am with you.

Some day I will gather your descendants from the east and from the west.

⁶I will command the rulers of the nations to the north and to the south,

‘Allow all the people of Israel to return to their country,

from the most distant places on the earth.

⁷Allow all those who belong to me to return,

because I have caused them to become a nation in order that they would honor me;

I am the one who has done that.’

⁸Summon the people who have eyes but act as though they were blind;

summon those who have ears but act as though they were deaf.

⁹Gather people of all nations together,

ones from all people groups,
and ask them this: 'Has any of their idols foretold the things that are happening now?
And can any of them predict what will happen in the future?'
Then bring people who will testify and say 'I heard them predict things,
and what they predicted was what happened,'
but they will be lying."

¹⁰But Yahweh says, "You people of Israel are my witnesses,
and you are the ones who serve me.
I chose you in order that you would know me, believe in me,
and understand that I am the only one who is truly God.
There is no other true God.
There was no other true God previously,
and there will never be another true God.

¹¹I, only I, am Yahweh,
and there is no other one who can save you.

¹²I said that I would rescue your ancestors,
and then I rescued them, and I proclaimed that I had done it.
No foreign god among you did that!
And you are witnesses that only I, Yahweh, am God.

¹³I am God, the one who has existed forever and who will exist forever;
no one can snatch people from my hand,
and no one can change what I have done."

¹⁴Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, is the one who rescues you, and this is what he says:
"For your sake, I will send an army to attack Babylon.
They will force the people of the city to run away from their city, and to wail in song instead of rejoice in song.

¹⁵I am Yahweh, your Holy One,
the one who caused Israel to become a nation, and the one who is really your king.

¹⁶I am Yahweh, the one who opened a path through the water,
making a road through the Sea of Reeds.

¹⁷Then I summoned the great army of Egypt
to come with all their chariots and horses.

But when they tried to pursue my people,
I caused the waves to flow over them and they drowned;
their lives ended like the light of a candle ends when someone snuffs out the wick.

¹⁸But do not think only about what happened in the past, long ago.

¹⁹Instead, consider the new thing that I am going to do.

I have already started to do it;
can you see it?

I am going to make a road through the desert.

And I will cause there to be streams in the wasteland.

²⁰The jackals and ostriches and other wild creatures will thank me
for giving them water in the desert.

I will cause streams to appear in the dry desert
in order that my people, the ones whom I have chosen, will have water;

²¹I will do that for the people whom I have created and chosen to belong to me,
so that they will tell others about the wonderful things I have done for them.

²²But now, you descendants of Jacob, you refuse to request my help.
You people of Israel have become tired of worshiping me.

²³You have not brought to me sheep or goats for offerings to burn up on my altar;
you have not honored me with any sacrifices,
even though the offerings of grain and incense that I asked you to bring to me were not a burden to you.

²⁴You have not bought for me any fragrant reeds,
and you have not poured out to me the sweet-smelling fat from any animal sacrifices.
But you have burdened me by all the sins that you have committed,
and made me weary because of all your iniquities.

²⁵I am the one who is able to forgive you for all your sins;
I am the only one who can do that,
with the result that I will never think about them again.

²⁶Tell me what I have done that you do not like.
Do you think that when you state your case, you will prove that you are innocent?

²⁷No, what has happened is that the first ancestor of you Israelites sinned against me,
and since then, all your leaders have rebelled against me.

²⁸That is why I will cause your priests to be disgraced;
I will allow others to destroy you people of Israel
and caused you to be despised.”

Chapter 44

¹But now, you people of Israel whom Yahweh has chosen to serve him, listen to me.

²Yahweh, the one who created you, watched over you while you were being born, and helps you, says this:

“You dear people of Israel whom I have chosen,
you who serve me,
do not be afraid.

³I will pour water on your dry land
and cause streams to flow.

And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants
and greatly bless them.

⁴They will grow up like grass grows along the water,
like willow trees grow well along a riverbank.

⁵Some of them will say, ‘I belong to Yahweh,’
and others will say, ‘We are descendants of Jacob,’
and others will write on their hands, ‘We belong to Yahweh,’
and others will say, ‘We are Israelites, and we belong to Yahweh.’”

⁶Yahweh, the King of Israel, the one who saves us, commander of the angel armies, says this:

“I am the one who begins everything and who ends everything;
there is no other God.

⁷If there is anyone like me,

he should proclaim it!

He should speak and tell me now!

He should tell what has happened since I caused my people of Israel to become a nation long ago;
he should also explain why events in the past happened the way they did,
and he should predict what will happen in the future.

⁸My people, do not be afraid.

Long ago I told you things that would happen;

you know that I predicted them, and you can testify that I did that.

There certainly is not any other God.

There is no other God who is able to protect you.”

⁹All those who make idols are foolish,

and the idols that they think highly of are worthless.

And the people who worship those idols—it is as though they were blind,
and they will be ashamed for having worshiped those idols.

¹⁰Only foolish people would make idols in a mold,
idols that would never help them at all.

¹¹Those who make idols and those who worship them will be ashamed.

Those who make idols are only human beings,

but they claim that they are making gods!

They should stand in front of God in a courtroom,
and when they hear what he says, they will be terrified,
and they will all be disgraced.

¹²Metalworkers stand in front of hot coals
in order to make idols.

They pound them with hammers and shape them.

Because they work very hard, they become hungry and weak;
they become very thirsty and feel exhausted.

¹³Then a woodcarver takes a big block of wood and he measures it;
then he marks it to show where he will cut it.

He uses a chisel and other tools
to carve it to resemble a human.

He causes it to become a very beautiful idol,
and then he puts it in a special house, where he will bow down to it.

¹⁴Before he carves an idol from that block of wood, he has already cut down a cedar tree,
or he has selected a cypress tree or an oak tree
and allowed it to grow tall in the forest.
Or he has planted a pine tree,
and the rain has watered it and caused it to grow tall.

¹⁵After he uses part of the tree to make an idol,
he uses the other part to make a fire,
either to warm himself or to bake bread.
But he uses part of the same tree to make for himself an idol to worship!
He makes an idol, and then he bows down to worship it.

¹⁶He burns part of the wood of that tree to cook his meat and eats it and becomes full,
and he burns part of it to warm himself,
and he says, "I feel warm while I am watching the flames in the fire."

¹⁷Then he takes the rest of the wood
and makes an idol which is to be his god.
He bows down to it and honors it,
and prays to it and says,
"You are my god, so save me!"

¹⁸Those people are very stupid and ignorant.
It is as though they were blind and unable to see,
as though their minds were closed and unable to think well.

¹⁹They do not think about what they are doing,
that they are taking a block of wood
and burning half of it to warm themselves
and using some of the rest to bake bread and roast some meat!
They do not say to themselves,
"It is stupid to take the rest of the wood to make a detestable idol!
It does not make sense to bow down to a block of wood!"

²⁰They might as well be eating the ashes from a fire!
They trust in something that cannot save them;
they do not admit, "In my hand I hold something that is not really a god! "

²¹Yahweh says, "You descendants of Jacob,
you people of Israel who should be serving me,
I created you,
and I will not forget you.

²²I have gotten rid of your sins

like the wind blows away a cloud.

It is as though your transgressions were a morning mist
that I have blown away.

Return to me

because I have rescued you."

²³The sun and moon and stars in the sky, should sing,
and the very deepest places of the earth will should joyfully!

All the mountains and forests, and all you trees,
should sing loudly,

because Yahweh has rescued the descendants of Jacob,
and the people of Israel will praise him.

²⁴Yahweh, who saved you and created you, says this:

"I am Yahweh, the one who created everything.

I am the only one who stretched out the sky.

There was no one who was with me
when I created the earth.

²⁵I show that the false prophets are liars,
and I show that those who perform rituals to predict the future are fools.
Some people who falsely think that they are wise say that they know much,
but I show that they are foolish.

²⁶But I always cause to happen what my prophets predict.
I tell them to say to the people of Jerusalem, 'Some day people will live here again.'
And I tell them to say to the people in other towns in Judah that I, Yahweh, say,
'Your towns will be rebuilt;
I will cause the places that are only ruins to be rebuilt.'

²⁷When I say to the rivers, 'Dry up!'
they will become dry.

²⁸When I say about King Cyrus, 'He will take care of my people like a shepherd takes care of his sheep,
he will do all that I want him to do,'
he will say about Jerusalem,
'We must rebuild it!'

and he will also say, 'We must rebuild the temple!'"

Chapter 45

¹Cyrus is the one whom Yahweh has appointed to be the emperor of Persia

and to whom he will give great power;

Yahweh will enable him to defeat other nations

and to take away the power of their kings.

He will cause gates of cities to be opened,

and no one will ever be able to shut them.

²This is what Yahweh says to him:

"Cyrus, I will go ahead of you

and level the mountains.

I will smash down bronze gates

and cut through their iron bars.

³I will give you treasures that people have hidden in dark secret places.

I will do that in order that you will know that I am Yahweh,

the God to whom the Israelites belong,

the God who calls you by your name.

⁴I have summoned you, calling out your name,

for the sake of the people of Israel whom I have chosen, who serve me.

Even though you do not know me,

I will give you a title that has great honor.

⁵I am Yahweh, and there is no other God.

Even though you do not know me,

I will give you power to wage war

⁶in order that everyone in the world, from the east to the west, will know that there is no other God.

I am Yahweh, and there is no other God.

⁷I created the light and the darkness.

I cause there to be peace and I cause there to be disasters.

I, Yahweh, do all those things."

⁸Yahweh also says, "Just like the rain falls on the earth to help it,

I will help my people and rescue them; I will cause them to be treated justly.

I, Yahweh, am the one who will cause both of those things to happen.

⁹Terrible things will happen to those who argue with me, because I am the one who created them.

They are like clay pots who are arguing with the Potter who made them;

they are just like every other clay pot that is made, and yet they argue with the One who made them and formed them out of the clay.

Can a lump of clay say to the potter who made him,

'Why are you making me like this?'

The clay pot cannot say 'What do you think you are doing, making me this way?' or "You have no skill and your clay pots are not worth anything!"

¹⁰And it would be terrible if an unborn baby would say to its father,

'Why are you causing me to be born?'

or if it said to its mother,

'The result of your labor pains will be useless.'"

¹¹Yahweh, the Holy One of the Israelite people, the one who created Israel, says this to them:

"Why do you ask questions about what I do for you, my children?

Why do you instruct me about the work that I should do?

¹²I am the one who created the earth

and created people to live on it.

I stretched out the sky with my hands,

and I put the stars in their places.

¹³And I have made Cyrus to desire to do things that are right,

and I will enable him to do all those things easily. No one will be able to stop him.

His workers will rebuild my city,

and he will free my people who have been exiled.

And he will do it without my rewarding him!"

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁴And this is also what I, Yahweh, say to you, my people:

"You will rule the people of Egypt and Ethiopia,

and the tall people of Seba will become your slaves.

They will come to you bringing all the things that they sell,

and it will all be yours.

They will have chains on their arms as they follow you.

They will bow down in front of you and say,

'God is with you

and he is the only God;

there is no other God.'"

¹⁵God, although we cannot see you,

you are the one to whom we Israelite people belong, the one who saves us.

¹⁶All those who make idols will be humiliated.

They will all be disgraced together.

¹⁷But you, Yahweh, will rescue us, your Israelite people,

and we will be free forever.

Never again, during all the future, will we again be humiliated and disgraced.

¹⁸Yahweh is God;

he is the one who created the sky

and created and formed the earth.

He did not want it to remain with nothing living on it;

he wanted people to live on it.

He says, "I am Yahweh;

there is no other God.

¹⁹What I proclaimed, I did not speak secretly;

I did not hide what I was saying by speaking in a dark place.

When I spoke to the descendants of Jacob,

I did not tell them

'It will be useless for you to seek for me!'

I, Yahweh, speak only what is true and what is right.

²⁰You people who are still alive after experiencing great disasters,

should come and gather together and listen to this:

The people who carry around their wooden idols

and pray to them are foolish, because those idols cannot rescue them!

²¹Talk among yourselves and decide what you will say to prove that you should pray to idols.

And when you do that, I will ask you,

'Who predicted long ago what has now happened?
Did any idol tell you that those things would happen?'
No, it was only I, Yahweh, who told you,
because I am the only God; there is no other God.
I am a God who acts righteously and saves people;
there is no other one who does these things.

²²Everyone in the world should ask me to save them,
because I am the only God who can do that;
there is no other one.

²³I have solemnly declared, using my own name;
I have spoken what is true,
and I will never change what I have said:
Some day, everyone will bow in front of me,
and they will all solemnly promise to be loyal to me.

²⁴They will declare,
'Yahweh is the one who enables us to live righteously and to be strong.'
And all those who have been angry at Yahweh will come to him,
and they will be ashamed that they were angry with him.

²⁵Yahweh is the only one who will enable us Israelite people in all future times to defeat our enemies,
and then we will boast about what he has done for us.

Chapter 46

¹It is as though Bel and Nebo, the statues of the gods of Babylonia,
were bowing down as they are put on animals and carried away!
The statues are heavy burdens and will cause the animals to become tired!

²Gods and animals are all bowed down;
the gods can save neither themselves nor the beasts of burden;
the gods themselves are going into exile!

³Yahweh says, "You descendants of Jacob who were exiled,
I am not like the gods of Babylonia that must be carried;
instead, it is as though I have carried you

since you first became a nation.

I carried you even before you became a nation.

⁴I will be your God, and I will carry you for many years,
until it is as though your nation is an old man with gray hair.

I caused you to become a nation,
and I will sustain you and rescue you.

⁵There is certainly no one to whom I can be compared.

There is no one who is equal to me.

⁶So it is stupid that some people pour out gold and silver from their bags
and weigh it on a scale.

Then they hire a man who makes things from gold to make an idol from it.

After he makes an idol, they bow down and worship it!

⁷They lift it up and carry it on their shoulders.

They put it in a special place,
and it stays there.

It cannot move!

And when someone prays to it, it does not answer.

So obviously it cannot rescue anyone from his troubles!

⁸You people of Judah, do not forget this;
keep thinking about it, you sinful people!

⁹Think about the things that I did long ago.

Only I am God; I am God, and there is no one like me.

¹⁰Only I can tell what will happen in the future before it occurs;
I tell it long before it happens.

I will accomplish everything that I plan to accomplish,
and I will do everything that I want to do.

¹¹So I will summon Cyrus to come from the east like a swift and powerful eagle;
he will come from a distant country.

He will accomplish what I want him to.

He is the one who will do what I have said that I want him to do,
what I have planned.

¹²You stubborn people of Israel,
you who are completely unable to do what is right,
¹³I will rescue you,
and it will not be a long time before that happens.
I will do it soon.
I will rescue Jerusalem
and show to you Israelite people that I am glorious.”

Chapter 47

¹Yahweh also says, “You people of Babylon,
you should go and sit in the dust,
because your time to rule other countries is almost ended.
People will never again say that Babylonia is beautiful
like a very attractive young woman.
²You will be slaves, so take heavy stones
and grind grain like slave women do.
Take off your beautiful veils
and take off your robes as you prepare to cross streams to go where you will be forced to go.
³You will be naked and very ashamed.
I will have vengeance on you and will not pity you.”
⁴The one who frees us people of Judah, whom we call ‘Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies,’
is the Holy One of Israel.
⁵Yahweh says, “You people of Babylon,
sit silently in the darkness,
because no one will never again say that your city is like a queen that rules many kingdoms.
⁶I was angry with the people who belong to me,
and I punished them.
I allowed you people of Babylon to conquer them.
But when you conquered them, you did not act mercifully toward them.
You oppressed even the old people.
⁷You said, ‘We will rule other nations forever;

it is as though our city will be the queen of the world forever!

But you did not think about the things that you were doing,

or think about what would result.

⁸You people of Babylon who enjoy pleasures and who live in luxury,

listen to this:

You act as though you were gods, saying, "I am special, and there is no one better than I am,"

None of our women will never become widows,

and none of our children will never be killed in wars.'

⁹But both of those things will happen to you suddenly:

many of your women will become widows

and many of your children will die,

even though you perform much sorcery and many kinds of magic to prevent bad things from happening to you.

¹⁰You felt safe even though you were doing many wicked things,

and you said, 'No one will see what we are doing!'

You thought that you were very wise and knew many things,

and you said, 'We are gods, and there are no others like us,'

but you deceived yourselves.

¹¹So you will experience terrible things,

and you will not be able to prevent them by working magic.

You will experience disasters,

and you will not be able to pay any magician to keep those things from happening.

A catastrophe will happen to you suddenly,

something that you will not realize is about to happen.

¹²So continue to perform all your magic spells!

Keep doing the many kinds of sorcery that you have been doing for many years!

Perhaps doing those things will enable you to be successful;

perhaps you will be able to cause your enemies to be afraid of you!

¹³But all that has resulted from your doing all the things that the magicians have told you to do is that you have become tired!

The men who look at the stars, announce every new moon, predict what will happen

should come forward and rescue you from the disasters that you are about to experience.

¹⁴But they cannot do that, because they are like straw that is burning in a fire;

they cannot save themselves from being burned up in the flames.

They are unable to help you;

they are as useless as stubble that burns, but that fire will burn them up rather than let them enjoy the heat.

¹⁵And they will disappoint you, those with whom you faithfully worked and with whom you traveled and traded when you were younger,

and yet all of them keep doing their own foolish things;

and when you cry out for help, there is no one who can help you.”

Chapter 48

¹Descendants of Jacob,

who are also descendants of Judah and are now called the people of Israel,

listen to Yahweh!

You make solemn promises using the name of Yahweh,

and you request that the God to whom you Israelite people belong will hear you,

but you do not do it sincerely.

²You say that you live in the holy city of Jerusalem

and you insincerely say that you are relying on the God to whom you people of Israel belong,

the one who is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

³“Long ago I predicted what would happen.

And then suddenly, I caused those things to happen.

⁴I knew that you people were very stubborn;

I knew that your heads were as hard as iron or brass.

⁵That is why I told you those things long ago.

Long before they occurred, I announced that they would occur,

in order that when they happened you could not say

‘Our idols did it;

our statue carved out of wood or our idol made of metal caused them to happen.’

⁶You have heard those things that I predicted,

and now you have seen that they have all occurred,

so why do you not admit it?

Now I will tell you new things,

things that you have not known previously.

⁷I am causing them to happen now;
they are not things I did long ago.

So you cannot say, 'We already knew about those things.'

⁸I will tell you about things that you have never heard about or understood before.

Even long ago you did not pay attention to me.

I know that you act very deceitfully;
you have rebelled against me since you first became a nation.

⁹But for my own sake, in order that I will be honored,

I will not punish you immediately
and I will not completely get rid of you.

¹⁰I have purified you, but not the way people refine silver.

Instead, I have caused you to suffer very much to get rid of your impure behavior,

¹¹But for my own sake I will delay punishing you more;

I will delay for my own sake,
in order that my reputation will not be damaged.

I will not allow any person or any idol to be honored as I deserve to be honored."

¹²"You descendants of Jacob, you people of Israel whom I have chosen,
listen to me!

Only I am God;
I am the one who begins everything and who causes everything to end.

¹³I am the one who laid the foundation of the earth.

I stretched out the sky with my hand.
And when I tell the stars to appear,
they all do what I tell them.

¹⁴All of you, gather together and listen to me.

None of your idols has told this to you:
I, Yahweh, have chosen Cyrus to assist me,
and he will do to Babylon what I want him to do,
and his army will destroy the army of Babylonia.

¹⁵I have said it;
I have summoned Cyrus.

I have appointed him,
and he will accomplish everything that he attempts to do.

¹⁶Come close to me and listen to what I say.

Long ago I told you plainly what would happen,
and when those things occurred, I was causing them to happen.”

And now Yahweh the Lord and his Spirit have sent me, the prophet Isaiah, to give you a message.

¹⁷This is what Yahweh, the one who saves you, the Holy God of us Israelites, says:

“I am Yahweh, your God;

I teach you what is important for you to prosper;

I direct you and lead you to do the things that you should do.

¹⁸I wish that you had paid attention to my commands!

If you had done that, things would have gone well for you
like a river that flows gently;
you would have been successful again and again,
like waves that come without ceasing.

¹⁹Your descendants would have been as many as the grains of sand on the seashore
which no one can count.

I would not have needed to destroy them;
the country of Israel would not have been destroyed.

²⁰However, now I tell you,

leave Babylon!

Flee from being slaves of the people of Babylonia!

Proclaim this message joyfully;

send it to the most remote places on the earth:

‘Yahweh freed the people of Israel from being slaves in Egypt.’

²¹They were not thirsty when he led them through the desert,
because he split open the rock
and caused water to gush out for them to drink.’

²²But things will not go well like that for wicked people,” says Yahweh.

Chapter 49

¹All you people who live on islands in the ocean and in other distant areas,
pay attention to what I will say!

Yahweh called me before I was born;
he chose me when I was still in my mother's womb.

²When I grew up, he caused my messages to be like a sharp sword.
He has protected me by his hand.

He protects me like someone protects sharp arrows in a quiver.

³He said to me, "You will serve my Israelite people,
and you will cause people to honor me."

⁴I replied, "My work has been useless;
I have used my strength, but I have accomplished nothing worthwhile;
everything that I have done has been in vain.
However, Yahweh can honor me as he pleases;
my God is the one who will reward me as I deserve."

⁵Yahweh formed me when I was in my mother's womb in order that I would serve him;
he appointed me to bring the people of Israel back to himself.

Yahweh has honored me,
and he is the one who has caused me to be strong.

⁶He says to me,
"It is not enough for you to serve me
by bringing the descendants of Jacob back to worship me again;
I also want you to be like a light for the non-Israelites;
I want you to take my message about how to be saved to people all over the world."

⁷Yahweh, the one who saves us,
the Holy God of us Israelite people,
says to the one who was despised and rejected by the people of many nations,
to the one who is the slave of rulers,
"Some day kings will stand up to respect you when they see you,
and princes will bow down before you
because you serve me, Yahweh, the one who faithfully does what I promise.

I am the Holy God to whom you Israelites belong, the one who has chosen you.”

⁸This is also what Yahweh says:

“At a time when it pleases me, I will answer your prayers.

On the day when I rescue you from your oppressors, I will help you.

I will protect you and enable you to establish an agreement with other nations.

And by what you do, I will re-establish your nation of Israel

and allow you to live again in your land that was abandoned.

⁹You will say to those who were captured and exiled,

‘Leave Babylonia and return to your own country!’

And you will say to those who are in dark prisons,

‘Come out into the light!’

When that happens, they will again be like sheep

that eat grass in green pastures,

on hills where before there was no grass.

¹⁰They will not be hungry or thirsty anymore;

the hot sun will not beat upon them again.

I, Yahweh, will act mercifully toward them and lead them;

I will lead them to where there are springs of cool water.

¹¹And I will cause the mountains to become as though they were level roads,

and I will prepare good highways for my people to travel on, to return to Jerusalem.

¹²My people will return from far away;

some will come from the north, some from the west,

some from southern Egypt.”

¹³Because of what Yahweh has promised to do,

everything should shout joyfully—

the sky and the earth and the mountains should sing,

because Yahweh comforts his people,

and he will pity those who are suffering.

¹⁴The people of Jerusalem say,

“Yahweh has abandoned us;

he has forgotten about us.”

¹⁵But Yahweh replies,

"That is not true! Can a woman forget the infant that she is nursing?

Can she stop acting kindly toward the child to whom she has given birth?

But even if a woman would do that,

I will not forget you!

¹⁶Note that I have written your names on the palms of my hands;

I am always looking at the walls of your city.

¹⁷Soon your children will be returning there,

and all those who destroyed your city will leave.

¹⁸You will look around and see

all of your children coming back to you.

As surely as I live,

they will be with you for you to show to people

like a bride shows her wedding ornaments!

¹⁹Your land has been ruined and caused to become desolate,

but some day it will be filled with people,

and those who conquered you will be far away.

²⁰The children who were born while you were exiled will return to Jerusalem and say,

'This city is too small for us;

We need more space to live in!'

²¹Then you will think to yourselves,

'It is amazing that we have all these children!

Most of our children were dead,

and the rest were exiled.

We were left here alone;

so we do not know where all these children have come from!

Who raised them?'"

²²This is what Yahweh our God says:

"Watch! It is as though I will lift up my hand to signal to those who are not Israelites.

And they will carry your little sons and daughters on their shoulders

and bring them back to you.

²³Kings will serve you and will tutor your children,
and their queens will take care of your young children.

They will prostrate themselves in front of you
and lick the dust off your feet.

When that happens, you will know that I am Yahweh;
and those who trust in me will never be disappointed.”

²⁴There is no one who can snatch valuable things from a soldier who has captured those things in a war;
there is no one who can force a tyrant to free the people whom he has captured.

²⁵But Yahweh says this:

“Some day, those who have been captured will go free,
and the valuable things that tyrants have snatched from others will be returned,
because I will fight against those who fight against you,
and I will rescue your children.

²⁶And I will cause your enemies to destroy themselves
instead of murdering others.

When that happens, everyone in the world will know that I, Yahweh, am the one who saves you,
the one who rescues you from your enemies;
everyone will know that I am the mighty God to whom you descendants of Jacob belong.”

Chapter 50

¹This is also what Yahweh says:

“You Israelite people, do not think that I forced your parents to be exiled to Babylonia
like some men send away their wives
after giving them a paper
on which they state that they were divorcing them!

I certainly did not get rid of you like a man who sells his children to get money to pay what he owes.
No, the reason that I forced you to be exiled
was to punish you because of the sins that you have committed.

²When I came to you to rescue you,
why did no one answer when I called out to you?
Was there no one there to buy you back and take you home?

Did you think that I do not have the power to rescue you?

Think about this:

I can speak to a sea and cause it to become dry!

I can cause rivers to become deserts

with the result that the fish in the rivers die from thirst and rot.

³I cause the sky to become dark,

as though it was wearing black clothes because it was mourning because someone had died."

⁴Yahweh our God has taught me to speak for him,

in order that I may encourage those who are weary.

Each morning he awakens me,

in order that I may listen to what he teaches me.

⁵Yahweh our God has spoken to me,

and I have not rejected what he told me;

I have accepted it.

⁶I allowed people to beat me on my back

and to pull out the whiskers in my beard because they hated me.

I did not turn away from them

when they made fun of me and spat on me.

⁷But because the Lord Yahweh helps me,

I will never be humiliated.

Therefore I am determined to face difficulties,

and I know that nothing will cause me to be ashamed.

⁸God is near to me; he will show others that I have been right to trust him,

so if anyone stands in front of me and accuses me in a court,

he will not be able to show that I have done anything that is wrong.

⁹The Lord Yahweh defends me in court,

so no one will be able to condemn me.

All those who accuse me will disappear

like old clothes that have been eaten by moths.

¹⁰If you honor Yahweh

and do what his servant tells you to do,

even if you are walking in darkness, and it seems that there is no light,
trust in Yahweh your God to help you; depend on him.

¹¹But you people who oppose me by lighting your own fires,
and by carrying your own flaming torches:
go ahead and live according to your own knowledge,
according to what you think is best.
Yahweh tells you what will happen to you:
he will make you die in great torment!

Chapter 51

¹Yahweh says, "You people who desire to act righteously,
who want to do what I want you to do,
listen to me!

Think about Abraham!

It is as though he were a huge rock cliff;
and when you people of Israel became a nation,
it was as though I had cut you like stones from that rocky cliff.

²Think about your ancestor Abraham and his wife Sarah, of whom all of you are descendants.

When I first spoke to Abraham,

he had no children.

But after I blessed him, he had a huge number of descendants.

³Some day I, Yahweh, will encourage Abraham's descendants again,
and I will comfort all the people who live in the ruins of Jerusalem.

The deserts in that area will become like Eden;

it will be like the garden of Yahweh.

All the people there will be joyful and happy;

they will thank me and sing.

⁴My people of Judah, listen carefully to me,
because I command you to proclaim my laws;

the right things that I will do will be like a light for the people of all the nations. ⁵I will soon rescue you and them;
by my power I will rule over the people of the earth and bless them.

The people who live in the most distant lands on earth will wait for me to help them.

⁶Look up at the sky,
and look at the earth;
see what they are like now,
because some day the sky will disappear like smoke,
and the earth will wear out like old clothes wear out,
and people on the earth will die like flies.
But I will rescue you, and you will remain free forever,
and everyone will know what I do and I will always do what is right.

⁷You people who know what things are right to do,
and who know in your inner beings what is written in my laws,
listen to me!

Do not be afraid of people who taunt you;
do not be disturbed when people revile you,

⁸because some day they will be destroyed
like clothing that moths have eaten,
like wool garments that have been eaten by worms.

Everyone will know what I do and I will always do what is right;
and I will save you, and you will be saved forever."

⁹Yahweh, wake up and do something for us!

Show us how strong you are!

Do mighty things
like you did long ago,
when you stabbed Rahab, the sea monster, and cut it into pieces.

¹⁰Surely you are the one who dried up the sea,
and made a path through that deep water
in order that your people could cross it!

¹¹And those whom Yahweh will rescue from being exiled in Babylonia
will similarly return to Jerusalem singing.

Their being joyful forever will be like a crown on their heads.

They will not be sad or mourn anymore;

they will be completely joyful and happy.

¹²Yahweh says,

"I am the one who encourages you.

So why are you afraid of humans
who will wither and disappear like grass?

¹³You should not have forgotten me, Yahweh, the one who created your nation,
the one who stretched out the sky
and laid the foundations of the earth.

You should not be afraid of those who are angry with you
and want to destroy you.

You should not be afraid of them now,
because those angry people have now disappeared!

¹⁴Soon you people, whom your enemies have caused to be slaves in Babylonia, will be freed!
You will not remain in prison, and you will not die of hunger,

¹⁵because I am Yahweh, your God,
the one who stirs up the sea and causes the waves to roar;
I am Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!

¹⁶I have given you my message to proclaim,
and I have protected you by my hand.
I have done this in order to stretch out the sky
and lay the foundation of the earth.

And I have done this in order to say to you Israelites,
'You are my people!'

¹⁷You people of Jerusalem, wake up!
You have experienced Yahweh severely punishing you.
Yahweh has caused you to suffer much
and to experience disaster.

Yahweh gave you this cup to drink, but this was Yahweh's cup!

He forced you to drink every drop out of that large cup, down to the bottom of the bowl. And that drink made you stagger like you had drunk strong wine. This strong wine represents the anger of God, and you are to drink all of it!

¹⁸Now you do not have any children
who are able to take your hand and guide you. You cannot help yourself.

¹⁹You have experienced these disasters:

Your country has become desolate;

your cities have been destroyed;

many people have died from hunger;

many people have been killed by your enemies' swords.

Now there is no one to weep with you and sympathize with you.

²⁰Your children have fainted and lie at the corner of every street;

they are as helpless as an antelope that has been caught in a net.

What has happened to them is because Yahweh has been very angry with them;

he has rebuked them severely.

²¹So now, you people who have suffered much,

you who were acting as if you were drunk because you were drinking from his cup.

But in truth, it is not because you have drunk out of a cup filled with wine, but because of something else that Yahweh will do.

²²Yahweh, your Lord and your God,

the one who argues your case to defend you, he says this:

"I have taken away that cup that holds my anger toward you,

and I made you experience my anger when I made you drink from that cup.

But now I have taken it from you so that you will never drink of it again.

²³Instead, I will cause those who have tormented you to suffer;

I will severely punish those who said to you,

'Lie down in order that we may walk on you;

lie down on your stomachs

in order that your backs will be like streets that we can walk on.'"

Chapter 52

¹You people who live in the holy city of Jerusalem, wake up!

Be strong again!

Show that your city is beautiful and glorious;

uncircumcised foreigners, those who do not honor Yahweh, will never again enter your city to attack you.

²People of Jerusalem, get up from where you have been sitting in the dust,

and sit down properly!

You people who have returned from being exiled,
take off from your neck the chains that the Babylonians fastened around your necks,

³because this is what Yahweh says:

"When you were sent as captives to Babylonia,
no one paid to make that happen.

So now you will be brought back,
and no money will be paid to anyone for your release."

⁴Yahweh our Lord also says this:

"Long ago, my people went to Egypt to live there.

Later the soldiers of Assyria oppressed them.

⁵But now think about what is happening:

My people are being forced to be slaves again, this time by the people of Babylonia. They have taken my people away, but they never declared any just reason for taking them captive.

And the rulers of Babylon boast and make fun of them (as I, Yahweh, have said they would do),
and the other people groups in the world despise the mention of my name.

⁶But after that, my people will love me and honor me;

when that happens, they will know that I am the one who said that this would happen. I am the one who speaks,
and I say,

'Yes, this is Yahweh who is speaking to you.'

⁷It is a wonderful thing when messengers come from across the mountains and
bring good news,

the news about God giving us peace and saving us,

the news that the God to whom we Israelite people belong is now showing everyone his power as king!

⁸The watchmen who are guarding the city will shout and sing joyfully,

because while they are watching,

they will all see Yahweh returning to Jerusalem.

⁹Jerusalem was ruined,

but the people who are there now should start to sing joyfully,

because Yahweh will encourage his people;

he will set his people free and bring them back to Jerusalem.

¹⁰Yahweh will show all the nations that he is holy and powerful.

People in the most remote places on earth will know

that he has rescued his people.

¹¹So leave the places where you were taken to when you were captured,
where everything is unacceptable to God.

You men who are carrying the items used in the temple of Yahweh,
leave there and return to Jerusalem,
and purify yourselves in order to be acceptable to worship God.

¹²But it will not be necessary for you to leave suddenly,
to flee in panic,
because Yahweh will go in front of you;
and he will also protect you from being attacked at the rear while you travel.

¹³Listen carefully!
My servant will act wisely and do all that Yahweh wants him to do,
and he will be honored more than anyone else.

¹⁴But many people will be appalled when they see what has happened to him.
Because he was beaten very badly, his appearance will be changed;
people will hardly recognize that he is a human.

¹⁵But he will purify the people of many nations by sprinkling them clean;
even kings will be silent when they stand in front of him,
because they will see someone that no one had told them about before,
and they will understand things that they had not heard about before.

Chapter 53

¹Who will believe what we have heard about God's servant?

Who will see what Yahweh does by his great power?

²While God watches, his servant will grow up fragile like a very young tree,
like a weak young plant that shoots up, a stem that is growing in dry ground.
There will be nothing beautiful or majestic about him,
nothing that would cause us to want to look at him.

³People will despise and reject him.

He will endure much pain, and he will suffer much.

Because his face will be very disfigured, people will not want to look at him; he will not even look human any more;

people will despise him and think that he is not worth paying any attention to.

⁴But he will be punished for the sicknesses within our lives;

he will endure great pain for us.

But we will think that he is being punished by God,

afflicted for his own sins.

⁵But people will pierce him through and kill him because of the evil things that we did;

they will wound him because of our sins.

They will beat him in order that things may go well with us;

because they will whip him, we will be healed.

⁶All of us have gone away from God like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd.

We have turned away from doing the things that God wants in order to do the things that we want.

We deserve to be punished, but Yahweh will punish him instead for all of our sins.

⁷He will be abused and caused to suffer,

but he will not say anything to complain.

They will lead him to where they will execute him,

like they lead a lamb to where it will be slaughtered.

And like a sheep does not bleat when the shearer cuts off its wool,

he will not say anything to defend himself when he is killed.

⁸After he is arrested and put on trial,

he will be taken away and executed.

And no one at that time will think anything more about him.

For he will die;

he will receive all the penalties brought on by the curses against us for the wrong things we have done.

⁹Although he will never have done any wrong or deceived anyone,

people will place his corpse where wicked people are buried, and in a rich man's grave.

¹⁰But it will be Yahweh's will that he be afflicted and caused to suffer. When he dies as an offering for your own sin,

he will benefit many, many people, as if they were his children;

he will live a long time after he dies and becomes alive again,

and he will accomplish everything that Yahweh has planned.

¹¹When he sees all that he will accomplish because of his suffering,

he will be satisfied.

And because of what will have happened to him, Yahweh's righteous servant,
he will cause the guilt of many people to be ended,
because he will bear the guilt for their sins.

¹²So Yahweh will share with many people the spoils he has won from his enemies.

His servant will be like a king who divides the spoils among his soldiers,
because he put himself in danger of dying and did in fact die.

Even though people had considered him to be a sinner,
he removed the guilt of many people,
and he interceded for those who have done things that are wrong.

Chapter 54

¹Yahweh says, "You people of Jerusalem, start to sing!

You who are like women who have never given birth to children, sing loudly and shout joyfully,
because you, who are like childless women who have been abandoned by their husbands, will soon have more
children

than women who have never had any children.

²Make your tents larger;

make them wider,

and fasten them firmly with tent pegs.

³You will need to make your city much larger

because soon you and your descendants will spread all over the land.

They will force the people of other nations to leave where they are,
and you will live again in the cities that people had previously abandoned.

⁴Do not be afraid; you will no longer be ashamed.

Previously you were ashamed because your enemies conquered you
and caused your nation to be like a widow,
but soon you will not even remember that.

⁵I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the Holy One of Israel, who rules over the whole earth,
the one who created you,
will be like a husband to you.

⁶Your nation was like a woman whose husband left her,
and caused you to be very sad;

you were like a young woman who
got married when she was very young,
and then her husband abandoned her.

⁷I abandoned you people of Jerusalem for a while,
but now I am saying, 'I will take you back.'

⁸I was very angry with you for a while,
and I turned away from you.

But I will act mercifully toward you
and I will faithfully love you forever.

That is what I, Yahweh, your rescuer, say to you.

⁹During the time that Noah lived,
I solemnly promised that I would never again allow a flood to cover the earth.
So now I solemnly promise that I will not be angry with you again and rebuke you.

¹⁰Even if the mountains and hills shake and collapse,
I will not stop faithfully loving you,
and I will not cancel my covenant
to cause things to go well for you.

That is what I, Yahweh, who acts mercifully, say.

¹¹You people of Jerusalem, your enemies acted very violently toward you;
it was as though your city had been battered by a severe storm,
and no one helped you.

But now I will cause your city to be rebuilt with stones made of turquoise,
and will cause the foundations of the city to be made of sapphires.

¹²I will cause the towers on the city wall to be made of rubies,
and all the gates and outer walls of the city will be made of other very valuable stones.

¹³I will be the one who will teach your children
and cause things to go well with you.

¹⁴Your government will be strong because it will act justly;
no one will oppress you;
you will not be afraid,
because nothing will come near you that will make you fear.

¹⁵If any army attacks you,
it will not be because I have incited them to do that,
and you will defeat anyone who attacks you.

¹⁶Think about this:
Blacksmiths fan the coals to make a very hot flame
in order to produce weapons that can be used in battles,
but I am the one who has produced blacksmiths!
And I am also the one who created people who destroy other people and cities.

¹⁷You will not be defeated by soldiers using weapons
that they have made to attack you,
and when others try to accuse you, you will prove that they are wrong, and you will condemn them to punishment.
That is the reward for the people who serve Yahweh.
I will defend them and show everyone else that they are right to trust me;
that is what I, Yahweh, promise.”

Chapter 55

¹“Come here! All you people who are in exile,
and listen to me!
If you are thirsty,
now is the time for you to come to me and get your water!
Now those who had no money,
you can come and buy wine and milk from me, the finest wine and the best milk!
You can get what you need from me,
and you can buy it now!
You can buy it even though you do not have any money,
and even though you could never afford it!

²Why do you spend money to buy things that do not supply what you really need?
Why do you work hard to get money to buy things that do not truly satisfy you?
Pay attention to what I say
and acquire what is really good!
If you come to me, then in your heart you will truly be happy.

³Listen to me and come to me;

pay attention to me, and if you do that, you will have new life within you.

I will make a covenant with you that will last forever

to faithfully love you like my love for King David.

⁴By what he did, I showed my power to many people groups;

I caused him to be a leader and commander over the people of many nations.

⁵And similarly, you will summon people of other nations to come to you,

nations that previously you have not heard about,

and they had not heard about you;

and they will come to you quickly

because they will have heard that I, Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, have honored you.

⁶Seek to know Yahweh while it is still possible for you to do that;

call to Yahweh while he is near!

⁷Wicked people should abandon their wicked behavior,

and evil people should stop thinking what is evil.

They should turn to Yahweh,

and if they do that, he will act mercifully toward them;

they should turn to Yahweh, their God,

because he will fully pardon them for all the wicked things that they have done.

⁸Yahweh declares that what he thinks is not the same as what you think,

and what he does is very different from what you do.

⁹Just as you people on the earth can never reach the sky,

the thoughts of Yahweh are that much higher than the way you think.

His ways are always different from what you do.

And so, you can be sure that you can never fully understand the way Yahweh thinks or know the reasons for what Yahweh does.

¹⁰Yahweh sends the rain and snow down from the sky,

and they water the ground.

When the ground becomes moist, it causes plants to sprout and grow,

with the result that the soil produces seed for the farmer to plant and grain to produce flour to make bread for people to eat.

¹¹And similarly, the things that I promise to do, I will always cause to happen;

my promises will always come true.

They will accomplish the things for which I spoke them.

¹²This is why you will leave Babylon joyfully;

you will have peace as Yahweh leads you out.

It will be as though the hills and mountains sang joyfully,

and the trees in the fields clapped their hands.

¹³Instead of thornbushes and briers,

pine trees and myrtle trees will grow in your land.

As a result of that, people will honor Yahweh much more;

and what Yahweh does will cause everyone to remember what he has promised, and they will honor him."

Chapter 56

¹Yahweh says to all the people of Judah,

"Do the things that are fair and right,

because I will soon come to rescue you; I will soon show everyone that you have been right to trust me.

²I will bless those who faithfully obey my laws about the Sabbath days.

I will bless those who keep sacred my Sabbath days,

and who do not do any work on those days,

and who refrain from doing anything that is evil.

³Foreigners who have believed in me should not say,

'Yahweh will surely not allow me to belong to his people.'

And eunuchs should not say,

'Because I am deformed and unable to have children, I cannot belong to Yahweh;

I am like a tree that has completely withered.'

⁴They should not say that, because I, Yahweh, say this to the eunuchs

who obey my laws about the Sabbath,

and who choose to do the things that please me,

and who obey all the other laws of the covenant that I made with the Israelite people:

⁵I will cause people to put inside the walls of my temple a monument to them;

because of that monument, they will be honored more than they would have if they had children;

they will be honored forever.

⁶I will also bless those who are not Israelites
who join themselves to me,
who serve me and worship and love me,
who obey my laws about the Sabbath,
and who faithfully obey all the other laws of the covenant that I made with the Israelite people.

⁷I will bring them to my sacred hill in Jerusalem,
and cause them to be very joyful in my temple where people pray to me,
and I will accept the sacrifices that they burn on my altar and other sacrifices that they offer,
because my temple will be a building where people of all nations pray to me.

⁸I, Yahweh, the Lord, the one who will bring back the people of Israel who have been forced to go to other countries, say this:

I will bring from other countries many more people to join those Israelites whom I have brought back."

⁹"You surrounding nations have armies that are like animals in the forest;
come and attack Israel!

¹⁰The Israelite leaders should be like watchdogs to protect the people,
but it is as though they were blind.
They understand nothing.
They are all like dogs that cannot bark.
Good watchdogs bark when strangers approach,
but the Israelite leaders do not warn the people that their enemies are coming.
Instead, they just want to lie down and sleep and dream.

¹¹And they are like greedy dogs;
they never get all that they want.
They are supposed to lead the people, like good shepherds lead their flocks,
but they are ignorant,
and they each do whatever they want to do.

¹²They say to each other, 'Come, let us go and get some wine and other alcoholic drinks,
and let us become drunk!
And tomorrow we will enjoy drinking even more!'"

Chapter 57

¹Righteous people die,

and no one is concerned about it.

Godly people die,

and no one understands why.

God takes them away in order that they will not endure more calamities,

²and now they have peace.

They lived righteously,

and now they rest peacefully in their graves.

³Yahweh says, "But you who practice sorcery, come here!

You who worship idols,

listen to me!

⁴Do you realize whom you are ridiculing,

and whom you are insulting?

Do you realize to whom you are sticking out your tongues?

You are insulting me, Yahweh!

You are always rebelling against me and always lying, just like your ancestors.

⁵You are eager to sleep together under every tall green tree where you worship your gods.

You kill your children as sacrifices to your idols in the dry riverbeds,

and offer them as sacrifices to your idols in the rocky caves.

⁶You take big smooth stones from the riverbeds

and worship them as your gods.

You pour out wine to be an offering to them,

and you bring grain to burn for an offering to them.

Do you think that I enjoy all those things?

⁷You sleep with idols' prostitutes on every hill and mountain,

and you go there to offer sacrifices to your gods.

⁸You have put charms behind your doors and doorposts,

and you have deserted me.

You have taken off your clothes

and climbed into your bed,

and invited more of your lovers to come to bed with you.

You have paid them to sleep with you,

and you have looked at their private parts.

⁹You have given fragrant oil and lots of perfume to kings,
and you sent representatives to distant countries to look for other gods to worship;
you even tried to send messengers to the place of the dead to search for new gods.

¹⁰You became weary because of doing all those things,
but you never said, 'It is useless for us to do that.'
You found new strength for worshiping idols,
so you continued to do so.

¹¹Was it because you were afraid of those idols more than you were afraid of me that you lied about what you were doing,
and you do not even think about me?
Was it because I did not punish you for a long time that you are not afraid of me?

¹²You think that the things that you have done are right,
but I will tell you the truth:
It will not help you to do any of those things.

¹³When you cry out for help to your collection of idols,
they will not rescue you.
The wind will blow them away; a single breath will carry them all away.
But those who trust in me will live in the land of Israel,
and they will worship me on Zion, my sacred hill."

¹⁴Yahweh will say, "Prepare yourselves to receive me,
like people build and prepare a road for a king to come on.
Get rid of the things that are causing you to sin.

¹⁵Because this is what I say—I, Yahweh, who am holy and honored more than anyone else, and who live forever:
I live in the highest heaven, where everything is holy,
but I also am with those who are humble and who are sorry for the sinful things that they have done.
I will greatly encourage those who have repented.

¹⁶I will not accuse people forever;
I will not always be angry with them,
because if I did that, people would become weak;
all the people whom I created and caused to live would die.

¹⁷I was angry with my people because they sinned by taking with force what belonged to others.

Because I was angry, I punished them and turned away from them,
but they continued sinning.

¹⁸I have seen the evil things that they continually do,
but I will restore them and lead them.

I will encourage them.

As for those who are mourning,

¹⁹I will enable them to sing songs to praise me.

I will restore all my people, those who live near Jerusalem and those who live far away,
and I will cause things to go well for them.

²⁰Wicked people do not have peace in their inner beings;
they are like a sea whose waves are always churning up mud,

²¹and I, Yahweh, say that things will never go well for those who are evil.”

Chapter 58

¹Yahweh said to me,

“Shout loudly!

Shout like a loud trumpet!

Shout to warn my Israelite people about their sins!

²They worship me every day;
they come to my temple because they say that they are eager to know what I want them to do.

They act as though they were a nation that does things that are righteous,
that would never abandon the commands of me, their God.

They request me to decide matters justly,
and they are eager that I should come to them.

³They say, ‘We have fasted to please you,
but you did not notice our doing that.

We humbled ourselves,
but you did not pay any attention!’

I will tell you why I did not pay attention.

It is because when you fast,
you do it only to please yourselves,

and you act cruelly toward all your workers.

⁴You fast, but you also quarrel and fight with each other with your fists.

Doing things like that while you fast will certainly not cause me to hear your prayers where I am, high in heaven.

⁵You bow your heads

like the tops of reeds bend when the wind blows,

and you wear rough clothes and cover your heads with ashes like people do when they are grieving.

That is what you do when you are fasting,

but do you really think that will please me?

⁶No, that is not the kind of fasting that I desire.

Instead you should seek to free those who have been unjustly put in prison,

and encourage those who are treated cruelly;

and free those who have been oppressed in any way.

⁷Share your food with those who are hungry

and to allow those who have no houses to stay in your houses.

Give clothes to those who do not have clothes,

and do not hide yourself from your relatives who need help from you.

⁸If you do those things,

what you do for others will be like a light that shines when it dawns.

The troubles that have been caused by your sins will end quickly.

Others will know about your righteous behavior,

and the glorious presence of Yahweh will protect you from behind

like I protected the Israelite people when they left Egypt.

⁹Then you will call out to me,

and I will quickly answer and say, 'I am here to help you.'

Stop oppressing people;

stop falsely accusing people;

and stop saying evil things about people.

¹⁰Give food to those who are hungry,

and give to people who are afflicted the things that they need.

Your doing that will be like a light that shines in the darkness;

instead of doing evil to people, the good things you do for people will be like the sunshine at noontime.

¹¹Yahweh will guide you continually,

and he will give you good things to satisfy you.

He will enable you to remain strong and healthy.

You will be like a garden that is well watered,

like a spring that never dries up.

¹²Your people will rebuild the cities that were destroyed long ago;

they will build houses on top of the old foundations.

People will say that you are the ones who are repairing the holes in the city walls,

and who are repairing the streets where people live.

¹³Do not travel on the Sabbath days,

and on Sabbath days do not do only the things that you delight to do.

Enjoy the Sabbath days, and consider them to be delightful.

The Sabbath days are my holy days.

Honor me, Yahweh, in everything that you do on the Sabbath days.

Do not talk about and do things to please yourselves.

If you do all the things that I have just now told you to do; listen, and I will tell you what I will do for you.

¹⁴I will enable you to be joyful.

I will greatly honor you;

it will be as though you were riding with me above the highest mountains!

I will give to you the blessings that I gave to your ancestor Jacob.

Those things will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 59

¹Listen to this! Yahweh's power is not too little to rescue you.

He has not become deaf; he can still hear you when you call to him for help.

²But you have separated yourselves from your God by the sins that you have committed.

Because of your sins, he has turned away from you,

with the result that he does not pay attention to what you request him to do.

³You do violent things to others,

with the result that your hands are stained with their blood.

You constantly tell lies,

and you say evil things about others.

⁴When you accuse someone in court, what you say is not fair and it is not true.

You accuse people falsely; you depend on the lies you tell.

You are constantly planning to cause trouble for others,

and then you do those evil things that you planned.

⁵What you plan to do to harm people is like the eggs a poisonous snake lays, like a web that a spider catches its victims in.

Cobras will hatch from those eggs,

and insects will fall into the spider's web.

⁶You cannot hide the evil deeds that you have done.

You are constantly acting violently.

⁷You are very quick to go and do evil deeds,

and you hurry to murder people who are innocent.

You are continually thinking about sinning.

Wherever you go, you destroy things and cause people to suffer.

⁸You do not know how to act peacefully or to treat others fairly.

You always are dishonest,

and those who imitate your behavior never have any peace within themselves.

⁹Because of that, God does not rescue us from our enemies,

it seems that he is not acting fairly toward us.

We expect God to give us light,

but all he gives us is darkness.

¹⁰We are like blind people who have to feel along the wall to be able to walk anywhere.

We stumble and trip at noontime like we would when it is dark.

We are like dead people who are among healthy people.

¹¹We growl like hungry bears;

we continually moan like doves.

We ask God to do what is just,

but nothing happens.

We want God to rescue us,

but it seems that he is far away.

¹²But these things are happening because it is as though our sins are piled high in the presence of God,

and it is they that testify against us.

We cannot deny it;

we know that we have done many wrong things.

¹³We know that we have rebelled against Yahweh;

we have turned away from him.

We oppress people by what we testify against them;

we do not allow them to get what they have a right to get.

We think about the lies that we can tell,

and then we tell them.

¹⁴In our courts, the judges do not decide cases fairly;

no one is acting righteously.

In plazas where people gather together, no one tells the truth;

it seems that people are not allowed to say what is true.

¹⁵No one tells the truth,

and people try to ruin the reputations of those who quit doing evil.

Yahweh looked around, and he saw that no one was doing what is just;

he was very displeased.

¹⁶He was disgusted when he saw that no one tried to help those who were being treated cruelly.

So he used his own power to rescue them;

it is because he is always righteous that he did that.

¹⁷It is as though he were a soldier who put on his armor and a helmet;

his continually doing what is right is like his armor, and his ability to rescue people is like his helmet.

His being extremely angry and his being ready to get revenge on those who do evil are like his robes.

¹⁸He will repay his enemies for the evil things that they have done.

He will severely punish even those who live far from Jerusalem.

¹⁹When that happens, people everywhere, from the east to the west, will respect and honor Yahweh,

because he will come like a rushing river that is pushed along by the strong wind that Yahweh sent.

²⁰And Yahweh says that he will come to Jerusalem to free his people;

he will come to rescue those in Judah who have stopped doing sinful things.

²¹This is what Yahweh says to his people: "This is the covenant that I will make with you: My Spirit will not leave you, and you will always have my message. You will be able to declare it, and your children and grandchildren will be able to declare it forever."

Chapter 60

¹You people of Jerusalem, stand up!

Yahweh has done glorious things for you,

and he has acted powerfully for you;

so show others that he is very great!

²But spiritual darkness has covered all the other people groups on the earth,

complete darkness,

but Yahweh will show you how great he is,

and other people will also see it.

³People of all people groups will see that he is very great by seeing what he has done for you,

and kings will come to see the wonderful things that have happened to you.

⁴Yahweh says, "Look around, and you will see the people who will be returning from exile!

Your sons will come from distant countries;

others will carry your little daughters home.

⁵When you look at this happening,

you will be very joyful in your inner beings,

because people will bring valuable goods to you from all around the world.

They will bring valuable things from many nations in ships.

⁶People will also bring valuable goods to you on herds of camels:

camels from the Midian and Ephah areas of northern Arabia.

And from Sheba in southern Arabia they will come, bringing gold and frankincense;

they will all come to praise me, Yahweh.

⁷They will bring flocks of sheep and goats from Kedar in northern Arabia and give them to you.

They will bring rams from Nebaioth for you to sacrifice on my altars,

and I will accept them happily.

At that time I will cause my temple to be very beautifully decorated.

⁸And what are those things that are

moving swiftly like clouds?

They resemble pigeons returning to their nests.

⁹But they are really ships from Tarshish that are bringing your people back here.

When your people come, they will bring with them all the valuable possessions that they have acquired,

and they will do that to honor me, Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel,
because I will have greatly honored you.

¹⁰Foreigners will come and rebuild the walls of your cities,
and their kings will serve you.

Although I punished you because I was angry with you,
these things will happen now because I will act mercifully toward you because I am kind.

¹¹The gates of your cities will be open during the day and also during the night,
in order that people will be able to bring into your cities valuable things from many countries,
with their kings being led to you in the processions.

¹²And the kingdoms and nations whose people refuse to allow you to rule them will be completely destroyed.

¹³The glorious things in Lebanon will be brought to you—
lumber from cypress trees and fir trees and pine trees—
to be used to make my temple beautiful.

When that is done, my temple will truly be glorious!

¹⁴The descendants of those who oppressed you will come and bow down to you;
those who despised you will prostrate themselves in front of your feet.

They will say that your city on Mount Zion
is the City of Yahweh,
where the Holy One of Israel lives.

¹⁵Previously everyone hated you and ignored you,
but now your city will be majestic forever;
and I will cause you to be joyful forever.

¹⁶People of all nations and their kings will gladly bring their wealth to you.
When that happens, you will realize that I truly am Yahweh,
the one who saves you and rescues you from your enemies,
and that I am the mighty one to whom you Israelite people belong.

¹⁷Instead of metals that are not valuable, like bronze and iron,
I will bring to you silver and gold.

Instead of wood and stones,
I will bring you bronze and iron for your buildings.
There will be peace in your country,

and your rulers will do what is fair.

¹⁸People in your country will no longer act violently,
and people will no longer destroy your land and drive you out of it.
The people in the city will be safe,
and everyone there will praise me.

¹⁹And you will no longer need the sun and moon to give you light,
because I, Yahweh, will give you more light than the sun and moon;
I will be a glorious light for you forever.

²⁰It will seem as though the sun and moon will always be shining,
because I, Yahweh, will be an everlasting light for you.
You will never again be sad because of things that happen to you.

²¹Your people will all be righteous,
and they will occupy the land forever,
because I myself have put you there like people plant trees
in order that you will show others that I am very great.

²²At that time, the groups that are very small now will become very large clans,
and small clans will become great nations.
All those things will happen because, I, Yahweh, will cause them to happen at the right time."

Chapter 61

¹The Spirit of Yahweh our Lord is on me;
he has appointed me to bring good news to those who are oppressed,
to comfort those who are discouraged,
and to free all those who are as though they are chained by the wrong things that they continually do.

²He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that now is the time when Yahweh will act kindly toward his people;
now is the time when our God will get revenge on their enemies.

³To all those in Jerusalem who mourn,
he will give beautiful things to wear on their heads
instead of ashes that they put on their heads to show that they were sad;
he will cause them to rejoice instead of being sad;

he will enable them to be happy instead of being discouraged.

They will be called 'people who continually do what is right,
people who are like tall oak trees that Yahweh has planted'
to show others that he is very great.

⁴Those who return from Babylon will rebuild the cities that the soldiers from Babylon tore down.
Even though those cities have been destroyed and abandoned for many years,
they will be restored.

⁵Foreigners will be the ones who will take care of your flocks of sheep and goats,
and plow your fields and take care of your grapevines.

⁶But you are the ones who will be like the priests to serve Yahweh,
to work for God.

You will enjoy valuable goods that are brought from other nations,
and you will be happy that those things have become yours.

⁷Previously you were shamed and disgraced,
but now you will have great blessings;
previously your enemies humbled you,
but now you will have many good things;
you will be happy because you will be in your land again,
and you will rejoice forever.

⁸"I, Yahweh, am very pleased with those who decide matters fairly;
I hate those who illegally take things from other people.

I will surely repay my people
for all that they have suffered in the past.

And I will make an everlasting agreement with them.

⁹Their descendants will be honored by people of other nations; their children will be honored by all the other nations.

Everyone who sees them will know that they are a nation that I, Yahweh, have blessed."

¹⁰I greatly rejoice because of what Yahweh has done!

I am happy in all my inner being,
because he has saved me and declared that I am righteous;
those blessings are like a robe that he has put on me.
I am as happy as a bridegroom in his wedding clothes,

or a bride wearing jewels.

¹Just as seeds sown in a garden sprout from the soil and grow,
Yahweh our God will cause people of all nations to act righteously,
with the result that they will praise him for doing that.

Chapter 62

¹Because I am very concerned about the people of Jerusalem,
I will do something to help them.
I will not stop praying for them
until they are rescued from their oppressors,
until that becomes as apparent to everyone as the dawn every morning,
until people can see it as clearly as they see a torch shining brightly at night.

²Some day the people of many nations will know that Yahweh has rescued you, his people.
Their kings will see that your city is very great.
And Yahweh will give your city a new name.

³It will be as though Yahweh had held you up in his hands in order that everyone can see you.
Under his authority you will be like a crown worn by a king.

⁴Your city will never again be called 'the deserted city,' and your country will never again be called 'the desolate land';

it will be called 'the land that Yahweh delights in,'
and it will also be called 'married to Yahweh.'
It will be called that because Yahweh will be delighted with you,
and it will be as though you were his bride.

⁵You people will live in all the country of Judah
like a young man lives with his bride.
And our God will be happy that you belong to him,
like a bridegroom is happy that his bride belongs to him.

⁶You people of Jerusalem, I have placed watchmen on your walls;
they will earnestly pray to Yahweh day and night.
You watchmen, you must not stop praying
and reminding Yahweh about what he has promised to do.

⁷And tell Yahweh that he should not rest

until he causes Jerusalem to be a city that is famous and admired throughout the world.

⁸Yahweh has raised his right hand to solemnly promise to the people of Jerusalem:

“I will use my power and will never again allow your enemies to defeat you;

soldiers from other nations will never come again to take away your grain

and the wine that you worked hard to produce.

⁹You yourselves will grow the grain,

and you will be the ones who will praise me, Yahweh, while you eat the bread made from the grain.

Inside the courtyards of my temple,

you yourselves will drink the wine made from the grapes that you harvested.”

¹⁰Go out through the city gates!

Prepare the highway on which people will return from other countries!

Cause the road to become smooth;

clear off all the stones;

set up signal flags to help the people groups to see the road to Jerusalem.

¹¹This is the message that Yahweh has sent to the people of every nation.

Tell the people of Israel, “The one who will rescue you is coming!

Look! He will be bringing to you your reward;

those whom he has rescued will be going ahead of him.”

¹²They will be called: “Yahweh’s own people,

and ones whom he rescued.”

And Jerusalem will be known as: “The city that Yahweh loves,”

and “The city that is no longer abandoned.”

Chapter 63

¹I ask, “Who is this who is coming from the city of Bozrah in Edom,

whose clothes are stained red from blood?

Who is this who is wearing beautiful robes?”

He replies, “It is I, Yahweh, declaring that I have defeated your enemies,

and I am able to rescue you!”

²I ask him, “What are those red spots on your clothes?

It appears that you have been treading on grapes to make wine.”

³He replies, "I have been treading on my enemies, not on grapes.

I did it myself; no one helped me.

I punished them because I was very angry with them,

and my clothes became stained with their blood.

⁴I did that because it was time for me to get revenge;

it was time to rescue my people from those who had oppressed them.

⁵I searched for someone who would enable me to help my people,

but I was amazed that there was no one to help me.

So I defeated their enemies with my own power;

I was able to do that because I was very angry.

⁶Because I was extremely angry, I punished the nations;

I caused them to stagger like drunk men,

and I caused their blood to pour out on the ground."

⁷I will tell about all the things that Yahweh has done for his people because of his faithful love for them,

and I will praise him for all that he has done.

Yahweh has done good things for us people of Israel;

he has acted mercifully toward us

and he has steadfastly and faithfully loved us.

⁸Yahweh said, "These are my people;

they will not deceive me";

so he rescued us.

⁹When we had many troubles,

he was sad also.

He sent his angel from before his presence to rescue us.

Because he loved us and was merciful to us,

he saved us;

it was as though he had picked our ancestors up and carried them all those years during which they were oppressed in Egypt.

¹⁰But we rebelled against him,

and we caused his Holy Spirit to be sad.

So he became like an enemy

who fought against us.

¹¹Then we thought about what happened long ago,
during the time when Moses led our ancestors out of Egypt.
We cried out, "Where is the one who brought our ancestors through the Sea of Reeds
while Moses led them?

Where is the one who sent his Holy Spirit
to be among our ancestors?

¹²Where is the one who showed his glorious power
and caused the water to separate when Moses lifted his arm above it,
with the result that he will be honored forever?

¹³Where is the one who led our ancestors while they walked through the seabed?
They were like horses that were racing along and never stumbled.

¹⁴They were like cattle that walk down into a valley to rest,
and the Spirit of Yahweh enabled them to go to a place where they could rest.
Yahweh, you led your people,
and you caused yourself to be praised."

¹⁵"Yahweh, look down from heaven;
look down on us from your holy and glorious home.
You were previously very concerned about us, and you acted powerfully to help us.
But it seems that you do not act mercifully and zealously for us anymore.

¹⁶You are our father, even if
Abraham does not know what is happening to us,
and Jacob is not concerned about us, either,
but Yahweh, you are our father;
you rescued us long ago.

¹⁷Yahweh, why did you cause us to wander away from your road?
Why did you cause us to be stubborn in our inner beings,
with the result that we no longer honor you?
Help us like you did previously,
because we are the people who serve you and belong to you.

¹⁸We, your holy people, possessed your sacred temple for only a short time,
and now our enemies have destroyed it.

¹⁹Now it seems as though we never were ruled by you,
as though we never belonged to you.”

Chapter 64

¹“Yahweh, I wish that you had come down from the sky;
you would have caused the mountains to shake with fear.

²It would have been like fire burning up dead wood,
or like fire making water to boil.

Come down in order that your enemies will know who you are,
and so that the people of other nations will tremble in your presence.

³You did awesome things that we were not expecting you to do;
the mountains shook when you came down onto Mount Sinai.

⁴Since long ago no one has ever seen or heard about a God like you;
you help those who depend on you.

⁵You help those who joyfully do what is right,
those who conduct their lives as you want them to.

But we did not do that; we continued to sin,
and so you became angry with us.

We have been sinning for a long time.

It is only if we continually do what you want us to do that you will save us.

⁶We have all become people who are not fit to worship you;
all of the good things that we have done are only like bloodstained rags.

Because of our sins, we are all like leaves that dry up
and are blown away by the wind.

⁷None of our people worships you,
and no one really tries to persuade you to help him.

You have turned away from us.

It is as though you have abandoned us, so that we keep sinning and become more and more guilty.

⁸But even so, Yahweh, you are our father.

We are like clay that a potter uses,
and you created us, like a potter creates pottery.

⁹Yahweh, do not continue to be angry with us;
do not keep thinking about our sins forever.
Do not forget that we are all your people.

¹⁰All of your towns in Judah have become like the wilderness;
even Jerusalem has been destroyed.

¹¹Your glorious temple on Mountain Zion, where our ancestors worshiped you,
has been completely burned up.
And all our other beautiful things have been ruined.

¹²Yahweh, you see all those things, but it seems that you refuse to do anything to help us.
It seems that you will cause us to suffer much more.”

Chapter 65

¹This is what Yahweh said:

“I was ready to reply to my people,
but no one requested me to help them.
I was ready to help even those who did not call out to me.
I continued to say, ‘I am here to help you!’

²It is as though I had continually held out my arms to show that I was ready to help my people who rebelled
against me,
and who continually did the evil things that they wanted to do.

³They boldly continue to do things that cause me to be angry:
they offer sacrifices to their idols in their gardens,
and they burn incense to them on altars made of bricks and tiles.

⁴They remain awake at night in cemeteries,
talking with the spirits of dead people.
They eat the meat of pigs,
and their pots are full of the broth of meat that is unacceptable to me.

⁵Then they say to others,
‘Stay away from me; do not come near me,
because I am very holy,
with the result that you should not touch me.’
People like that are like smoke in my nose

from a fire that burns continually.

⁶I have written a record of all the evil things that they have done.

And I will not remain silent about all those things;

I will certainly punish these people

⁷for the sins that they and their ancestors have committed.

They have mocked me by burning incense to their idols on the hilltops.

So I will punish them like they deserve for doing those things.”

⁸This is also what Yahweh said:

“When there is a cluster of nice grapes on a vine,

people do not throw them away,

because they know that there is good juice in those grapes.

Similarly, because there are some people in Judah who faithfully serve me,

I will not get rid of all of them.

⁹I will spare some of the descendants of Jacob

who are living on the hills of Judah.

I have chosen them, and they will possess that land;

they will worship me, and they will live there.

¹⁰Then all the land from the Plain of Sharon near the Mediterranean Sea and as far east as the Valley of Achor near Jericho will become pastureland,

where their cattle and sheep will rest.

¹¹But it will be different for you who have abandoned me,

you who do not worship me on Zion, my sacred hill,

you who worship Gad and Meni, the gods who you say will bring you good luck and good fortune.

¹²It is I, not Meni, who will decide what will happen to you;

you will all be slaughtered by swords.

That will happen because you did not answer

when I called out to you.

I spoke to you,

but you did not pay attention.

Instead, you did things that I said are evil;

you chose to do things that do not please me.

¹³I, Yahweh the Lord, will give to those who worship and obey me things to eat and drink,

and they will be happy;
but all you evil people will be hungry and thirsty,
and you will be sad and disgraced.

¹⁴Those who worship and obey me will sing joyfully,
but you evil people will wail loudly
because you will be suffering in your inner beings.

¹⁵Those whom I have chosen will use your names when they curse people;
I, Yahweh the Lord, will get rid of you.
But I will give to those who worship and obey me a new name.

¹⁶The people in this land have had many troubles,
but I will cause those troubles to occur no more.
Therefore those who request me to bless them and those who solemnly promise to do something
should never forget that I am God, who faithfully do what I promise to do.

¹⁷Note this: Some day I will create a new heaven and a new earth.
They will be very wonderful, with the result that you will no longer think about all the troubles you had previously.

¹⁸Be glad and always rejoice because of what I will do:
Jerusalem will be a place where people rejoice;
the people who live there will always be happy.

¹⁹I will rejoice about Jerusalem,
and I will be delighted with my people.
People will no longer weep or cry because of being distressed.

²⁰No child will die when it is still an infant;
all people will live until they are very old.
People will consider that anyone who is a hundred years old is still young;
they will consider that anyone who dies who is younger than that has been cursed.

²¹My people will build houses and then live in them.
They will plant vineyards and then eat grapes from those vineyards.

²²The houses that they build, no one will take those houses away from them and live in them.
No one will take a vineyard away from its owner.
My chosen people will live a long time, like trees do,
and they will enjoy the things that they have done—

the houses that they have built and the crops that they have planted.

²³They will not work hard in vain,

and their children will not die from some calamity.

I will certainly bless their children and their grandchildren.

²⁴Before they call to me to help them, I will answer;

I will answer their prayers while they are still praying for me to do something for them.

²⁵No one will be harmed or injured anywhere on Zion, my sacred hill:

wolves and lambs will eat grass together peacefully;

lions will eat hay like oxen do, and they will not attack people.

Snakes will not hurt anyone; they will lie on the ground and eat only dirt.

That is surely what it will be like because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 66

¹Yahweh also said this:

"All of heaven is like my throne,

and the whole earth is like my footstool.

So you could certainly not build a house

that would be adequate for me to live in and rest!

²I have created everything;

all things exist because I made them.

That is true because I, Yahweh, have said it.

The people I am most pleased with are those who are humble,

who patiently endure it when they suffer,

and who tremble when they hear me rebuking them.

³You have chosen to continually do the things that you want to do:

some of you slaughter oxen to sacrifice them to me,

but you also bring human sacrifices to your idols!

You sacrifice lambs to me,

but you kill dogs to offer them to your gods.

You offer grain to me,

but you also bring pigs' blood to your idols.

You burn incense to me,
but you also praise your idols.
You delight to do those disgusting things.

⁴When I called out to you,
you did not answer.

When I spoke, you did not pay attention.
You did many things that I say are evil,
and you chose to do things that I did not like.

So now I will punish you by causing you to experience the things that you yourselves have done, that you yourselves are afraid of."

⁵But you people who tremble when you hear what Yahweh says,
listen to what he says now:

"Some of your people hate you and drive you away
because you belong to me.

They make fun of you, and they say,

'Yahweh should show his glorious power!

We want to see him do something to cause you to be truly happy.'

But some day those people will be very disgraced."

⁶At that time, you will listen to the noise in the city.

You will hear the shouting in the temple.

It will be the sound of Yahweh paying back his enemies.

⁷No one ever heard that a woman gave birth to a baby
when she was just starting to have birth pains.

⁸Certainly no one ever heard about such a thing happening,
and no one has ever seen it happen.

Similarly, no one ever heard that a nation was created in one instant,
not in one day.

But Jerusalem is like a woman who gives birth to children
as soon as she starts to have birth pains.

⁹Women certainly do not bring infants to the time when they are ready to be born and then do not allow them to be born.

Similarly, Yahweh will do for Jerusalem what he has promised to do:

he will cause Jerusalem to be full of people again.

That will happen because Yahweh has said it.

10You people in Jerusalem, rejoice!

And all you people who love Jerusalem should also be happy.

You people who were sad because of what happened to Jerusalem,
you should now be glad.

11You people in Jerusalem will have everything that you need,

like a baby that gets all it needs from its mother's breasts.

You will enjoy all the abundant and glorious things in the city.

12Yahweh has promised,

"I will cause Jerusalem to be full of valuable things that come from other nations;

those things will pour into Jerusalem; it will be like a big flood.

I will take care of the people of Jerusalem

like women care for the babies that they nurse.

13I will comfort you people in Jerusalem like mothers comfort their children."

14When you see those things happen,

you will rejoice.

Your old bones will become strong again

like in the springtime, when the grass grows.

When that happens, everyone will know that Yahweh has power to help those who worship and obey him,

but that he is angry with his enemies.

15Yahweh will come down with flames of fire,

and his chariots will come down like a whirlwind;

he will be extremely angry,

and he will punish his enemies by burning them in a fire.

16It is as though Yahweh had a big sword,

and he will judge and execute many people.

17Yahweh says, "Some of you will prepare yourselves to enter the garden of idols by washings and special diets and clothing, and you follow into that place, those who eat the meat of pigs and mice, and other things that I have forbidden you to eat. I promise you, I will stop them and they will not do this any more!"

18I know all the evil things that they all think and do. It is now time for me to gather together the people who live in all nations and who speak all languages, and to show them that I am very great.

¹⁹I will do something among them to show everyone who they are, and those whom I have spared will go to various distant countries: To Tarshish, Put, Lud (home of archers), Meshech, Tubal, Javan, and to distant islands. I will send them to proclaim to nations that have never heard about me that I am very great and glorious. ²⁰Then they will bring back here your relatives who have been exiled, like the offerings that my Israelite people used to bring in the correct manner to the temple. They will travel to Jerusalem, where my holy mountain is; they will come on horses and in chariots, in wagons, on mules and on camels. ²¹I solemnly promise that I will appoint some of them to be priests, and others to do other work in my temple. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

²²I also promise that just like the new heaven and the new earth will last forever, you will always have descendants, and you will always be honored. ²³At every festival to celebrate the Sabbath each week and the new moon each month, everyone will come and worship me. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it. ²⁴Then they will go out of Jerusalem and look at the corpses of those who rebelled against me. The maggots in those corpses will never die, the fire will never stop burning them, and everyone who sees their corpses will detest them."

Jeremiah

Chapter 1

¹This is the message of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, who wrote this. He was a priest, from the town of Anathoth in the area where the tribe of Benjamin lives. ²Yahweh started to give him these messages when Josiah had been ruling Judah for almost thirteen years. ³Yahweh continued to give him messages when Josiah's son Jehoiakim was the king, and he continued to do that until Zedekiah had been the king of Judah for almost eleven years. It was in the fifth month of that year that the people of Jerusalem were exiled to Babylonia.

⁴One day Yahweh gave me this message,

⁵"I knew you before I finished forming you in your mother's womb.

I set you apart for my honor before you were born,

and I appointed you to be my prophet for all the nations."

⁶I replied, "O, Yahweh my God, do you not see that I am not qualified to speak for you? I am very young!"

⁷Yahweh replied, "Do not say that you are too young, because you must go to everyone to whom I will send you, and you must tell them everything that I tell you to say. ⁸And you must not be afraid of the people to whom you will speak, because I will protect you from being harmed by them. This will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

⁹Then it was as though Yahweh touched my mouth and said, "Listen to me! I have put my message into your mouth. ¹⁰Today I am appointing you to warn nations and kingdoms. You will tell them that I will completely destroy and get rid of some of them and that I will establish others and cause them to be prosperous."

¹¹Then Yahweh showed something to me, and said, "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I replied, "I see a branch from an almond tree."

¹²Yahweh said, "That is correct. And because the word for 'almond' resembles the word for 'watching', it means that I am watching what will happen, and I will make certain that what I have said to you about destroying nations will happen."

¹³Then Yahweh spoke to me again and said, "What do you see now?"

I replied, "I see a pot full of boiling water. It is in the north, tipping toward me."

¹⁴Yahweh replied, "Yes! It means that from the north great trouble will spread over this land, like boiling water pouring from a pot.

¹⁵Listen to what I say:

I am summoning the armies of the kingdoms that are north of Judah to come to Jerusalem.

Their kings will set up their thrones at the gates of this city to indicate that they are now the kings of Judah.

Their armies will attack and break down the walls of this city, and they will do the same thing to all the other towns in Judah.

¹⁶I will punish my people because of all the evil things that they have done;

they have abandoned me and they offer offerings of worship to false gods.

They worship idols that they have made with their own hands!

¹⁷So, get up and put on your clothes to get ready for action! Then go to the people of Judah and tell them everything that I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them, because if you are afraid of them, I will punish you as an example right in front of them! ¹⁸But listen! I will cause you to be strong, like a city that has strong walls around it. You will be as strong as an iron pillar or a bronze wall. Even the royal officials, the priests, and the general populace will not be able to defeat you. ¹⁹They will oppose you, but they will not be able to defeat you, because I will be with you and will protect you. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

Chapter 2

¹Yahweh gave me another message ²to proclaim to everyone in Jerusalem. He said that I should tell them this, "I, Yahweh, remember in your favor that you followed me and trusted in our covenant long ago.

You tried to please me like a bride tries to please her husband;

You loved me,

and you followed me through the desert.

³At that time you Israelites were set apart to me;

you belonged to me like the first part of the harvests belong to me.

I promised to punish all those who harmed you, my people,

and send disasters on them.

This is the way it will always be since I, Yahweh, said that it would happen."

⁴Listen to what Yahweh says, descendants of Jacob, all you people of Israel. You must listen to what Yahweh says.

⁵He says,

"What sin did I commit that caused your ancestors to turn far away from me?

They worshiped worthless idols,

and they themselves became worthless.

⁶They should have said,

'We need Yahweh. He is the one who brought us safely out of Egypt

and led us through a desert plain where there were a lot of pits.

We need Yahweh. He is the one who led us

where there was no water and where it was very dangerous,

through a land where no one lives or even travels.'

⁷But when I, Yahweh, brought you into a very fertile land,

in order that you could enjoy all the fruit and other good things that you would harvest,

you caused the land that I promised to give to you to be unfit for me
and to become disgusting to me.

⁸Your priests also did not ask
if I was still with them.

Those who teach God's laws are not faithful to me themselves!
And your leaders have rebelled against me.
Your prophets gave you messages from their god Baal,
and they worship worthless idols.

⁹So I, Yahweh, will accuse you in court.
In future years, I will also bring your children and your grandchildren to trial!
That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said that it will happen.

¹⁰If you go west to the island of Cyprus,
or if you go east to Kedar land,
and if you ask people in those places,
they will tell you that no people from their countries have ever done the wicked things that you people have done!

¹¹No people of any nation have ever abandoned their gods that they thought were glorious
and started to worship gods that are not really gods,
but you people have abandoned me, your glorious God,
and are worshiping gods that are useless.

¹²It is as though everything in the sky is dismayed about what you have done;
it is as though they tremble and are very horrified. I, Yahweh, see and declare this to you.

¹³You, my people, have done two evil things:
you have rejected me, the one who is like a fountain where you can obtain fresh water,
and you are worshiping gods that are like pits in the ground
that are cracked and which are not able to hold any water.

¹⁴You Israelite people, you were certainly not slaves when you were born;
so why were you captured by your enemies?

¹⁵Your enemies roared like lions,
and they destroyed your land.
Now your towns have been burned,
and no one lives in them.

¹⁶Soldiers from Memphis and Tahpenes, cities in Egypt, have defeated you
and shaved your heads to show that you are their slaves.

¹⁷But it is because you abandoned me, Yahweh your God,
that these disasters have happened to you, since I had been leading you to safety.

¹⁸So why are you trying to make an alliance with the rulers of Egypt who live near the Shihor?
Why are you trying to make an alliance with the rulers of Assyria who live near the Euphrates River?

¹⁹It is because you have been very wicked that I will punish you.

It is because you have turned away from me that I will condemn you.

When I do that, you will realize that bitter and evil things will happen to you because you have forsaken me,
Yahweh, your God,

and you no longer have an awesome respect for me.

That will certainly happen because I, the Lord, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies in heaven, have said it.

²⁰Long ago, you stopped obeying me and you would not allow me to lead you.

You refused to worship me, even though I saved you from being slaves.

Instead, you worship idols that are under trees on the top of every hill.

You love and worship those idols instead of me just like an unfaithful man loves a prostitute instead of his wife.

²¹It is as though you were the best grapevine that I could plant,
and I planted you so you would grow from the very best seed.

So how could you change yourself from the best grapevine into becoming like a vine that is disgusting and rotten?

²²Your guilt from your sins is like very bad stains on a cloth,
and you cannot get rid of those stains even by using very strong soap.

This is true because I, Yahweh, have said it.

²³You say that you have not sinned.

You claim to be acceptable to God

and that you have not worshiped the images of Baal.

But think about the disgusting things that you do very eagerly in Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem.

You are like desperate female camels running here and there to find male camels to mate with.

²⁴You are like wild female donkeys that live in the desert.

They sniff the air to find where the male donkeys are,

and there is no one who can restrain their lust.

The male donkeys that want to mate with them only wear themselves out chasing after them;
because at mating time they find them easily.

²⁵You constantly run here and there to find idols to worship, with the result that your sandals are worn out, and your throats have become dry.

I told you to stop doing that but you said that you could not stop, and you said that you loved those foreign gods and had to worship them!

²⁶A robber is disgraced when he is caught.

And all of you, including your kings and priests and prophets, are similarly disgraced.

²⁷You call a piece of wood that is carved to become a sacred idol, your 'father,' and you call a stone that you have set up, your 'mother.'

You have rejected me but when you experience troubles, you call for me to rescue you!

²⁸Why do you not shout to the gods that you made?

Why do you not plead with them to rescue you when you experience disasters?

For you have as many gods as you have cities and towns in Judah!

²⁹You complain that it was wrong for me not to have rescued you, but you have all rebelled against me, Yahweh, the one who is speaking to you right now.

³⁰I punished some of you, but you did not learn anything from my doing that.

Instead you have killed many of the prophets that I sent to you, like fierce lions kill other animals.

³¹You people of Israel, pay attention to what I say.

I have certainly never abandoned you in a desert;

I have never left you in a very dark land.

So, why do you, my people, say that you are free from my control and that you will not return to worship me anymore?

³²A young woman would certainly never forget to wear her jewelry, and a bride would never forget to wear her wedding dress, but you my people have forgotten me for many years.

³³You know how to easily find gods from other countries whom you can love.

You can find them more easily than a prostitute can find men to sleep with. You could teach her about infidelity!

³⁴You also have the blood of poor people on your clothes; the very people you have murdered; people who were innocent! You did not catch them robbing you!

³⁵Yet you say, 'I have done nothing wrong!

I am sure that Yahweh will not be angry with me for much longer.'

But I will punish you severely

for claiming that you have not sinned.

³⁶Previously you requested the army of Assyria to help you, but they were not able to help you.

Now you have requested the army of Egypt to help you, but they will not be able to help you, either.

³⁷They will capture you, and you will be their prisoners, very ashamed with your hands on your heads.

That will happen because Yahweh has rejected those nations that you are relying on, and they will not be able to help you at all."

Chapter 3

¹"People know that if a man divorces his wife and then she marries another man, her first husband certainly must not take her back again to be his wife again. She would be ceremonially unclean and she has broken the law of Yahweh.

This nation is like this woman.

But you have more idols than prostitutes have men whom they have slept with!

So, why should I accept you if you return to me? it is Yahweh who says this.

²"Look up at the barren hilltops.

On every hilltop you have given yourselves to the idols in the way a prostitute gives herself to her lovers.

You sat along the roadsides like an Arab nomad who is always waiting in the desert for someone to come; but you are waiting to have sex with those who pass by.

Your unfaithfulness is the worship of idols, and your prostitution is just like your idol worship.

The whole land is made unacceptable to Yahweh,

and your worship of idols is your prostitution and your wickedness is what made you unclean.

³That is why I have not sent you any rain at the times of the year when you needed it.

But you are like prostitutes

who are not at all ashamed for what they have done.

⁴Now each of you says to me, 'You are my father!

You have loved me ever since I was young!

⁵So surely you will not be angry with me forever!

You promised you would not obey me, and you did what you said!

And you sinned over and over again!

But you will not quit sinning!"

⁶One day when Josiah was the king of Judah, Yahweh said to me, "Have you seen what the people of Israel have done? They have turned away from me, like a woman who has abandoned her husband and sleeps with other men. They have gone up on every hilltop and under every shady tree and worshiped idols there. ⁷I thought that they would return to me, but they did not. And their brothers, the people of Judah, were watching all of this. ⁸So I sent the people of Israel away to other countries, as a man writes a note saying that he is divorcing his wife and then sends her away because she has committed adultery. But I realized that, just as the people of Israel, the people of Judah were not at all afraid of me. Instead, they acted just as the people of Israel had done. They also turned away from me and began worshiping idols, just as women who leave their husbands and go to other men. ⁹They did not care that worshiping idols offended me, so they have made the entire land unacceptable to me by worshiping idols of wood and stone. ¹⁰The people of Judah have pretended to return to me, but they have not been sincere. This is true because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹¹Then Yahweh said to me, "Jeremiah, the people of Israel have turned away from me, but what the people of Judah have done is worse. ¹²So go and tell this to the people of Israel,

'Yahweh says this to you Israelite people who have turned away from him:

I am merciful.

I will not continue to be angry with you forever.

So return to me.

¹³But you must admit that you are guilty,

and that you have rebelled against me, Yahweh, your God,

that you have worshiped idols under big trees everywhere,

and you have not obeyed me.

You have turned away from me.

¹⁴But you belong to me,

so come back to me, my children!

If you do, I will take you, one from each city and two from each clan,

and bring you back to Jerusalem.

¹⁵If you do that, I will appoint for you leaders with whom I am pleased who will guide you well because they will know and understand what pleases me.

¹⁶And when you become very numerous in your land, you will not need to talk about the Sacred Chest that contained the Ten Commandments. You will not think about it, and you will not want to make a new one.'

¹⁷At that time people will say that my throne is in Jerusalem. People from all nations will come there to worship me, and they will no longer stubbornly do the evil things that they desire in their inner beings.

¹⁸At that time you people of Israel and Judah will return from being exiled in lands to the north. You will return to the land that I gave to your ancestors to belong to them forever.

¹⁹You people of Israel, I wanted to accept you to be my children. I wanted to give you this delightful land. It is a land more desirable than the land of any other nation!

I wanted you to call me your father, and I wanted you to never stop honoring me.

²⁰But you have abandoned me like women who have abandoned their husbands." That is what Yahweh said, and I told it to the people of Israel.

²¹Then God said, "People will hear a noise on the barren hilltops. It will be the noise made by people weeping and pleading for God to be merciful to them. They will be admitting that they have forgotten Yahweh their God, and that they turned away from behaving as God wanted them to.

²²You Israelite people, come back to me! If you do that, I will cause you to never turn away from me again." The people will reply, "We are returning to you, because you are Yahweh, our God.

²³When we worshiped idols on the mountains, we did not get any help. Even though we shouted very loudly in our worship, every promise we believed turned out to be lies and only lies. We now know that trusting in Yahweh our God is the only way Israel will be rescued!

²⁴From the time when we were young, the shameful god Baal has taken away from us everything that our ancestors worked hard to acquire.

He has taken away their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, their sons and their daughters.

²⁵So, now we should lie down feeling very ashamed,
because we and our ancestors have sinned against Yahweh our God,
and we have never obeyed him.”

Chapter 4

¹Yahweh says, “You Israelite people, if you come back to anyone, it should be to me.

If you get rid of those detestable idols,
if you do not go away from me again,

²and if you declare, ‘Just as surely as Yahweh lives,’
when you take your oaths,
and if you are truthful, just, and righteous,
then the people in the other nations of the world
will ask me to bless them as I have blessed you,
and they will all come and honor me.”

³This is what Yahweh says to the people of Jerusalem and the other cities in Judah,
“Cause your inner beings to be ready to receive my messages
like farmers plow up hard ground in order that they can plant seed in it.
Just as farmers do not waste good seed by sowing seeds among thorny plants,
I do not want to waste my time telling you messages that you are not ready to receive.

⁴Show that your inner beings and your minds are devoted to me.
If you do not do that, my being angry with you
because of all the sins that you have committed
will be like a fire that will be impossible to extinguish.

⁵Declare this to all the people in Jerusalem and the rest of Judea;
blow the trumpets everywhere in the land to warn the people.
Tell them that they should flee to
the cities that have high walls around them.

⁶Shout to the people of Jerusalem
and run away now. Do not delay,
because I am about to bring a terrible disaster upon you

that will come from the north.

⁷An army that has destroyed many nations will attack you
like a lion that comes out of its den to attack other animals.

The soldiers of that army

are already marching toward your land.

They will destroy your cities and leave them without any people still living in them.

⁸So, put on rough clothes

and weep and beat your breasts

to show that you are very sorry for what you have done,

because Yahweh is still very angry with us.

⁹Yahweh declares that at the time when Yahweh punishes you, the king of Judah and all his officials will be very afraid.

The priests and the prophets will be terrified."

¹⁰Then I replied, "Yahweh my God, you completely deceived the people by telling them that there would be peace in Jerusalem, but now our enemies are ready to slaughter us with their swords!"

¹¹When that happens, Yahweh will say to the people of Jerusalem,

"A huge army will come to attack you.

They will not be like a gentle breeze that separates the wheat from the chaff.

They will be like a very hot wind that blows in from the desert.

¹²They will be like a strong blast that I will send.

Now I am declaring that I will punish you."

¹³And the people in Jerusalem will say, "Our enemies are about to rush down on us; their chariots are like whirlwinds.

Their horses are faster than eagles.

It will be terrible for us!

¹⁴You people of Jerusalem cleanse your inner beings,

in order that Yahweh will rescue you.

How long will you continue to think about doing evil deeds?

¹⁵From the city of Dan in the far north to the hills of Ephraim a few miles north of Jerusalem messengers are proclaiming that disasters are coming."

¹⁶So I said this to the people in other nations,

and also announced it in Jerusalem,

"Yahweh says that an army is coming to Jerusalem from far away;

they will shout a battle cry against the cities of Judah.

¹⁷They will set up tents around Jerusalem like people set up temporary shelters around a field at harvest time.
That will happen because the people of Judah have rebelled against me.

¹⁸You will be punished very severely;
it will be as though a sword has stabbed your hearts.
But you are causing those things to happen to you
because of the evil things that you have done.”

¹⁹Then I said to myself, “I am extremely anguished;
the pain in my inner being is very severe.
My heart beats wildly!
But I cannot remain silent
because I have heard our enemies blowing their trumpets
to announce that the battle against Judah will start immediately!

²⁰Disasters will occur one after another
until the whole land is ruined.
Suddenly all our tents will be destroyed;
even the curtains inside the tents will be ripped apart.

²¹How long will this battle continue?
How long will I continue to see the enemy battle flags
and hear the sound of their trumpets being blown?

²²Yahweh says: My people are very foolish!
They do not have a relationship with me.
They are like stupid children
who do not understand anything.
They very cleverly do what is wrong,
but they do not know how to do what is good.

²³God gave me a vision in which I saw
that the earth was barren and without form.
I looked at the sky,
and there was no light there.

²⁴I looked at the mountains and hills,

and they shook and moved from side to side.

²⁵I looked and saw that all there were no more people
and all the birds had flown away.

²⁶I looked and saw that the fields that previously were fertile had become a desert.
The cities were all ruined;
they had all been destroyed by Yahweh because he was extremely angry.”

²⁷This is what Yahweh is saying,
“the entire land of Judah will be ruined,
but I will not destroy it completely.

²⁸I will do to my people what I said that I would do,
and I will not change my mind.
So when that happens, it will be as though the earth will mourn
and the sky will become very dark.

²⁹When the people hear the sound of the enemy cavalry and archers marching,
they will be terrified as they flee from their cities.
Some of them will find places to hide in the bushes,
and others will run toward the quarries to escape being killed by their enemies.
All the cities in Judah will be abandoned;
not one person will remain in them.

³⁰So you who will surely be destroyed,
what will you do then?
Even though you have worn beautiful clothes and jewelry
and paint around your eyes,
those things will not help you,
because the people in other countries that you think love you really despise you,
and they will try to kill you.

³¹It is as though I already hear the people in Jerusalem crying very loudly,
as a woman cries when she is giving birth to her first child;
she gasps for breath and pleads for someone to help her,
and she shouts, ‘Something terrible is happening to me; they are about to murder me!’”

Chapter 5

¹Yahweh said to the people of Jerusalem, "Go up and down every street.

Search in the marketplaces to find people who do what is fair,

who try to be faithful to me.

If you find even one person like that,

I will forgive the people of Jerusalem and not destroy their city.

²But when the people there swear an official oath by Yahweh's life,

they are lying."

³So I prayed, "Yahweh, you are certainly searching for people who are faithful to you.

You punished your people, but they did not pay any attention.

You crushed them, but they ignored what you were telling them to do.

They were extremely stubborn

and refused to return to you."

⁴Then I thought, "We cannot expect these people to act righteously, because they are poor;

they do not have any sense.

They do not know the way Yahweh wants them to conduct their lives;

they do not know what God requires them to do.

⁵So, I will go and talk to their leaders,

because they surely know how God wants them to conduct their lives."

But they also have stopped obeying Yahweh,

and they will not allow him to lead them.

⁶Because of that, lions will come out of the forests and kill them;

wolves from the desert will attack them;

leopards that lurk outside their cities will maul anyone who walks outside the cities.

Those things will happen because the people have sinned very much against God

and have turned away from him very frequently.

⁷Yahweh says, "I cannot forgive these people;

even their children have abandoned me.

When they solemnly declare something, they ask their gods to show that what they say is true.

I gave my people everything that they needed,

but they often went to the high places on the hills, where they worshiped their idols and committed adultery there.

⁸Just like well fed male horses neigh, wanting to mate with female horses,
each of the men desires to sleep with his neighbor's wife.

⁹Should I not punish them for this?

I will certainly get revenge on this nation whose people behave like that!

¹⁰The people of Judah and Israel are like a vineyard.

Go along the rows in their vineyards

and get rid of most of the people,

but do not kill all of them.

These people do not belong to me,

so get rid of them,

like a gardener lops off branches from a vine.

¹¹The people of Israel and Judah have turned away from me completely.

¹²They have lied about me and said,

'He cannot do anything to help us!

He will not punish us!

He will not send disasters on us!

We will not experience wars or famines!

¹³What God's prophets say is nothing but wind!

They do not have messages from God!

And because they have not believed me, all of these things will happen to them!"

¹⁴So, this is what Yahweh, the commander of the armies of angels in heaven, has said to me,

"Because my people are saying those things,

I will give you a message to tell them that will be like a fire,

and these people will be like wood that the fire will burn up completely!

¹⁵Listen to Yahweh's declaration, you people of Israel:

I will bring the army of a distant nation to attack you.

It is a very powerful nation that has existed for a long time.

They speak a language that you do not know,

and which you will not be able to understand.

¹⁶Their soldiers are all very strong,

and the arrows from their quivers will send many Judean men to their graves.

¹⁷They will eat the food that you have harvested from your fields,
even though it should be your own children who eat your bread.
They will kill your flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

They will eat your grapes and your figs.

They will also destroy your cities that have high walls around them
and kill the people with their swords.

¹⁸But even when those things happen, I will not get rid of all of you.

¹⁹And when the people ask, 'Why is Yahweh doing this to us?'
you will tell them, 'You rejected him and worshiped foreign gods in your own land,
so now you will become slaves of foreigners in a land that is not your land.'

²⁰Yahweh instructed me to proclaim this message to the people of Israel and Judah,

²¹"Listen to this, you people who so are foolish, and you who have no understanding!
You have eyes, but you cannot see.

Yes, you have ears, but you cannot hear anything.

²²Why do you not have any awesome respect for me?

You should tremble when you are in my presence!

I, Yahweh, am the one who put a barrier along the shores
so that the waters of the ocean cannot cross it and flood the land.
The waves roll and roar, but they cannot go past that barrier.

²³But you people are not like the waves that obey me.

You people are very stubborn and rebellious,
and have constantly turned away from me.

²⁴You do not say to yourselves,
'Let us have an awesome respect for Yahweh our God,
the one who sends us rain at the times that we need it,
the one who causes the grain to become ripe at the harvest season.'

²⁵It is because of the wrong things that you have done, that those good things have not happened.
It is because of the sins that you have committed that you have been prevented from receiving those blessings.

²⁶Among my people are wicked people who hide along the roads to ambush people
like men who hunt birds put nets to catch them.

²⁷Like a hunter has a cage full of birds that he has captured,

their homes are full of things that they have gotten by deceiving others
so now they are very rich and powerful.

²⁸They are big and fat

because they eat rich food, and there is no limit to the evil deeds that they have done.

In court, they do not help ordinary people get judges to decide fairly for them, and they do not try to defend orphans.

They do not even want to listen to them in court.

²⁹So I will certainly punish them for doing those things.

I, Yahweh, declare that I will certainly get revenge on their nation.

³⁰Very appalling things are happening in this country:

³¹Prophets speak only lies

and priests rule by their own authority,

yet you people like that!

But when you start to experience disasters, what will you do?

Chapter 6

¹You people in Jerusalem who are from the tribe of Benjamin,

flee from this city!

Blow the trumpets in the city of Tekoa south of Jerusalem!

Send up a smoke signal in the city of Beth Hakerem

to warn the people of the coming danger!

A powerful army will come against you from the north,

and they will cause great destruction.

²Jerusalem is like a beautiful woman,

but it will soon be destroyed.

³Enemy kings, the shepherds of foreign people groups, will come with their armies and set up their tents around the city,

and each king will choose a part of the city for his soldiers to destroy as shepherds divide their pastures for their flocks of sheep.

⁴The kings will tell their troops,

'Make the sacrifices necessary to get ready for battle.

We should attack them before noontime,

but even if we arrive there late in the afternoon,

⁵we will attack them at night
and tear down their fortresses.”

⁶Yahweh, the commander of the armies of angels in heaven, says this,
“I will command those soldiers to cut down the trees outside Jerusalem
and to build ramps up to the top of the city walls!
This city must be punished
because everyone there continually oppresses others.

⁷Its people keep doing wicked deeds,
just as a well keeps producing water.
The noise from people doing violent and destructive actions is heard everywhere.
I continually see people who are suffering and wounded.

⁸Listen to what I am warning you, you people of Jerusalem,
because if you do not listen, I will reject you
and cause your land to become desolate,
a land where no one lives.”

⁹Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, says this,
“Your enemies will cause your country to become as desolate as a vineyard from which all the grapes have been
completely stripped from the vines.
Their soldiers will seize the possessions of those who remain in Israel after the others have been exiled
like farmers go to the vines again to pick any grapes that were left.

¹⁰Who can I, Jeremiah, speak to? Who would listen to me, even if I spoke to them?
The ears of the Israelite people are unable to hear what I have to tell them.
See! the message Yahweh gave me to tell them is offensive to them.
When they hear the message of Yahweh, they hate what I tell them!”

¹¹After hearing this I became very angry,
as Yahweh is angry, and I could not hold myself back any longer.
So Yahweh said to me,
“Tell the children in the streets and the young men who gather together.
Tell the men and their wives;
tell the very old people, also.

¹²Tell the men that I will give their houses to their enemies,
and I will give their property and their wives to them, also,

when I punish the people who live in this land!

¹³Everyone is trying to get money by tricking others,
from the the least important people to the most important people.

Even my prophets and priests, they all lie to get what they want.

¹⁴They act as though the sins of my people are like small wounds that they can easily treat.

They tell the people that everything will go well with them, but that is not true; things will not go well with them.

¹⁵They should be ashamed about the disgusting things that they do, but they are not ashamed at all. They do not even know how to blush.

So, they also will be among those who will be killed. They will be destroyed when I punish them.”

¹⁶This is also what Yahweh said to the Israelite people,

“Stand at the crossroads and look at the people who pass by.

Ask them what was the good behavior that their ancestors had long ago.

And when they tell you, behave that way.

If you do that, you will find rest for yourselves.

But you said that you did not want to do that!

¹⁷I sent my prophets who were like watchmen.

They told you to listen carefully when the trumpets blow to warn you that your enemies are approaching,
but you did not want to listen.

¹⁸Therefore, you people in the other nations, listen to this:

Pay attention to what is going to happen to the Israelite people.

¹⁹Listen, all of you!

I am going to cause disasters to happen to the Israelite people.

That is what will happen to them because they have refused to listen to what I told them.

They have refused to obey my laws.

²⁰You Israelite people, when you burn frankincense that came from Sheba
and when you offer to me sweet-smelling anointing oil that came from far away,

I will not be pleased with your sacrifices.

I will not accept the sacrifices that are completely burned on the altar;

I am not pleased with any of your sacrifices.

²¹Therefore, I will put obstacles on the roads on which my people will travel.

Men and their sons and people's neighbors and friends will stumble over those obstacles and fall down;
everyone will die.”

²²Yahweh also says this,

"You will see a huge army marching toward you from the north.

An army of a great nation very far away is preparing to attack you.

²³They have bows and arrows and spears;

they are very cruel, and do not act mercifully to anyone.

As they ride along on their horses,

the horses' feet sound like the roaring of the ocean waves;

they are riding in battle formation

to attack you people of Jerusalem."

²⁴The people of Jerusalem say to each other,

"We have heard reports about the enemy;

so we are very frightened, with the result that we are weak.

We are very afraid, and worried,

like women who are about to give birth to babies.

²⁵So, do not go out into the fields! Do not go on the roads,

because the enemy soldiers have swords and they are everywhere;

they are coming from all directions, and we are extremely afraid."

²⁶So I, Jeremiah, say to you,

"My dear people, put on rough clothes and sit in ashes

to show how much you are grieving.

Mourn loudly and cry very much,

as a mother would cry when her only son has died.

For your enemies are very near,

and they are going to destroy everything."

²⁷Then Yahweh said to me,

"Jeremiah, I have caused you to become like someone who heats metal very hot to completely burn the impurities.

You will examine my people's behavior.

²⁸You will find out that they are very stubborn rebels:

they are always slandering others.

Their inner beings are as hard as bronze or iron;

they all continually deceive others.

²⁹A metalworker causes the bellows to blow very hard to make the fire very hot to completely burn up the impurities.

But just as a fire does not cause all the waste material to run off,
it is impossible to separate the people from their wicked deeds.

³⁰I, Yahweh, have rejected them;

I say that they are like worthless silver.”

Chapter 7

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ²“Go to the entrance of my house and give this message to the people: You people of Judah, who worship here, listen to this message from Yahweh. ³This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to you: ‘If you improve your ways and start doing what is right, I will allow you to remain living in your land. ⁴But some people are repeatedly saying to you, ‘The temple of Yahweh is here, so we will be safe; he will not allow us and the temple to be destroyed.’ But do not pay attention to what they say, because they are deceiving you. ⁵I will act mercifully to you only if you change your behavior and stop doing evil things, and if you start to act fairly toward others, ⁶and if you stop oppressing foreigners who live in your country, and orphans and widows, and if you stop murdering people and worshipping foreign gods. ⁷If you do what I have told you, I will allow you to stay in this land that I promised to your ancestors long ago that it would belong to them and their descendants forever.

⁸People are repeatedly telling you, ‘The temple is here, so we are safe,’ and you are trusting that what they are saying is true. But those people are deceiving you; what they say is worthless. ⁹You think that you can steal things, murder people, commit adultery, tell lies in court, and worship Baal and all those other gods that you did not know about previously. ¹⁰Then you think you can come here and stand in front of this temple, which is my temple, and say ‘Nothing bad will happen to us!’, while you continue to do all those disgusting things. ¹¹Perhaps you do not know that you have made this temple, which is my temple, to become like a cave where thieves hide. But I, Yahweh, am telling you that I have seen all these things!

¹²Long ago I put my sacred tent in the district of Shiloh, to be a place where people would worship me. Think about how I destroyed it because my people, the Israelite people, did many wicked things there. ¹³And while you were continually doing those wicked things, I told you about it many times, but you refused to listen. I called out to you, but you refused to answer me. ¹⁴Therefore, just as I destroyed Shiloh, I will now destroy this temple that was built for people to worship me, this temple that you trust in, in this place that I gave to you and your ancestors. ¹⁵And I will expel you from this land and send you to other countries far away from me, just as I did to your relatives, the people of Israel.”

¹⁶Yahweh said to me, “Jeremiah, do not pray for these people any longer. Do not call out on their behalf or plead for me to help them, because I will not pay any attention to you. ¹⁷Do you see the wicked things that they are doing in the streets of Jerusalem and in the other towns in Judah? ¹⁸The children gather firewood and their fathers make fires on the altars to burn sacrifices. The women knead dough to make cakes to offer to their goddess Asherah who is called the Queen of Heaven. And on their altars they pour out offerings of wine to their other idols. All of those things cause me to become extremely angry! ¹⁹But I am not the one whom they are hurting; they are really hurting themselves by doing these things for which they should be very ashamed!” ²⁰So Yahweh the Lord says this: “Because I am extremely angry with what happens at this place, I will punish these people severely; my being very angry will be like a fire that will not be extinguished, and I will destroy the people, their animals, their fruit trees, and their crops.”

²¹Therefore, this is what Yahweh, commander of the armies of angels, the God of Israel, says: “Take away your offerings that you bring to burn completely on your altars and your other sacrifices; do not give them to me; eat

them yourselves! ²²When I led your ancestors out of Egypt, it was not offerings to be completely burned on the altar or other sacrifices that I wanted from them. ²³What I told them was, 'Obey me; if you do that, I will be your God and you will be my people. If you do the things that I want you to do, everything will go well for you.' ²⁴But your ancestors would not pay any attention to me. They continued to do the evil things that they wanted to do, everything that in their stubborn inner beings they desired to do. Instead of coming closer to me, they went further away from me. ²⁵From the day that your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have continued to send my prophets to you repeatedly. ²⁶But you, my people, have not listened to me or paid attention to what I said; you have been stubborn, and you have done more sinful things than your ancestors did."

²⁷Then Yahweh said to me, "When you tell all this to my people, they will not listen to you. When you call to them, they will not answer. ²⁸Say to them, 'You people of Judah have not obeyed Yahweh, your God; you have not accepted it when he tried to correct you. No one among you is truthful; you do not say anything that is true; you speak only lies.'

²⁹So, tell them to cut off their hair to show that they are mourning; tell them to go up into the barren hills and sing a sad funeral song,

Because I have completely rejected this generation of people who have made me angry." ³⁰Yahweh says this: "The people of Judah have done many things that I say are evil. They have set up their disgusting idols in my temple, causing it to become an unacceptable place to worship me. ³¹They have built altars at Topheth in Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem, and they sacrifice their sons and daughters on those altars. I never commanded them to do that; it was not even in my thoughts! ³²So they should beware! There will be a time when that place will no longer be called Topheth or the Hinnom Valley; instead, it will be called the Valley of Slaughter. There will be a huge number of people who will be buried there, with the result that there will be no space to bury more bodies. ³³The corpses of my people that are not buried and are left on the ground will be eaten by vultures and wild animals, and there will be no one to shoo them away. ³⁴There will be no one singing and laughing anymore in the streets of Jerusalem; there will be no more joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides in Judah, because the land will be completely destroyed."

Chapter 8

¹Yahweh says, "After your enemies have destroyed you, then they will break open the graves of your kings and other officials who lived in Judah, and the graves of your priests and prophets and other people who lived there. ²They will take out their bones from their graves and dishonor them by scattering them on the ground under the sun and the moon and the stars—those are the gods which my people loved and served and worshiped. No one will gather up their bones and bury them again; they will remain scattered on the ground like dung. ³And all the people of this wicked nation who are still alive and whom I have exiled to other countries will say, 'We would prefer to die than to continue to stay alive here in these countries.' That will be true because I, Yahweh, have said it."

⁴Yahweh said to me, "Jeremiah, tell the people that this is what I, Yahweh, am saying to them: 'When people fall down, they get up again, do they not?

When people are going along a road and find out that they are walking on the wrong road, they go back and find the correct road, do they not?

⁵Yes, they do, so why do these people of Judah continue trusting in those idols that have deceived them?

They continue turning away from me and betray my covenant, even though I have warned them of what will happen.

⁶I have listened carefully to what they say, but they do not say what they should say. Not one of them is sorry for having sinned.

No one says, "I have done wicked things." They are sinning and doing what they want to;

Charging into sinful behavior with the excitement of a horse that is running into a battle.

⁷Even the stork knows when the seasons change,
and the dove, the swallow, and the crane understanding the time of their migration!

But my people do not know what I, Yahweh, require them to do.

⁸Your men who teach you the laws that Moses wrote have been saying false things about those laws.
So, why do they continue saying, "We are very wise because we have the laws of Yahweh"?

⁹Those teachers, who think that they are wise, will be ashamed and dismayed when they are taken to other countries by their enemies

Because they sinned by rejecting what I told them. Truly, they were not very wise to do that!

¹⁰So, I will give their wives to other men; I will give their fields to the enemy soldiers who conquer them.

All the people, including those who are least important and those who are most important, they all are trying to get money by tricking others

Even my prophets and priests, they all lie to get what they want.

¹¹They act as though the sins of my people are like small wounds that they can easily treat.

They tell the people that everything will go well with them, but that is not true; things will not go well with them.

¹²They should be ashamed when they do disgusting things, but they do not even know how to show on their faces that they are ashamed about their sins.

So, they also will be among those who will be killed. They will be destroyed when I punish them.

¹³I will allow their enemies to take away the figs and grapes that the people would have harvested from their fields. Their fruit trees will all wither.

They will not receive all the blessings that I prepared for them. This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹⁴Then the people will say, "Why should we wait here in these small towns? We should go to the cities that have high walls around them, but even if we do that we will be killed there,

Because Yahweh our God has decided that we must be destroyed; it is as though he has given us a cup of poison to drink, because we sinned against him.

¹⁵We hoped that things would go well for us, but things have not gone well.

We hoped that we would recover and be strong again, but only things that terrify us are happening to us.

¹⁶People far north in the Israelite city of Dan can already hear the snorting of the horses of those who are preparing to attack us. It is as though the entire land is shaking as their army approaches;

they are coming to destroy our land and everything in it, the people and the cities."

¹⁷Yahweh says, "I will send those enemy soldiers to Judah, and they will be like poisonous snakes among you.
No one will be able to stop them from attacking you; they will attack you like snakes do, and kill you."

¹⁸My grief for the people of Judah has overwhelmed any sense of happiness. I am very sad in my inner being.

¹⁹Throughout our land, the people ask, "Has Yahweh abandoned Jerusalem?

Is he, our city's king, no longer there?" Yahweh replies, "If they want me to be in Jerusalem, why do the people worship idols and foreign gods?"

²⁰The people say, "The harvest season is finished, the summer has ended, but Yahweh still has not rescued us from our enemies."

²¹I cry because my people have been crushed. I mourn, and I am completely dismayed.

²²I ask, "Surely there is medicinal balm in the region of Gilead! Surely there are doctors there!"

But my people have been badly wounded in their spirits, and nothing can heal them.

Chapter 9

¹"I wish that my head could produce as many tears as water from a spring, and that my eyes were like a fountain of tears,

since I cry night and day for all of my people who have been killed by their enemies.

²I wish that I could leave my people and forget them, and go and live in a shack in the desert,

because they have not remained faithful to Yahweh; they are a mob of people who deceive others.

³They use their tongues to tell lies just as people shoot arrows with bows.

They are powerful, but not because they are faithful, but they go about doing wicked things. "They do not know me," Yahweh says.

⁴Do not trust your neighbors and even your brothers! They all are as deceitful as Jacob was.

They slander each other and tell lies about each other.

⁵They deceive their friends and never tell the truth.

They lie continually and, because of that, they have become skilled liars; they do one oppressive deed after another until they grow tired from sinning so much.

⁶Jeremiah, everyone living around you is a deceiver. Not one of them will admit that I am God.

⁷Therefore I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say this:

Listen carefully to what I say: I will test my people, like a metalworker puts metal in a hot fire to completely burn out the impure bits.

Because of all the evil things that my people have done, there is absolutely nothing else that I can do.

⁸What they say injures people like poisoned arrows do.

They say to their neighbors, 'I hope things will go well for you,' while they are planning to kill them.

⁹Should I not punish them for doing that?

Yes, I should certainly get revenge on the people of a nation that does things like that!"

¹⁰So, I will weep and wail for the people who live in the mountains and in the pastures,

because those areas will be desolate, and no one will live there.

There will be no cattle there to call to each other,

and all the birds and wild animals will have fled to other places.

¹¹Yahweh also says, "I will cause Jerusalem to become a heap of ruins, and only jackals will live there.

I will destroy the towns of Judah, with the result that they will be completely deserted; no people will live there."

¹²I said, "Only people who are very wise can understand these things.

Only those who have been taught by Yahweh can explain these things to others.

The wise people are the only ones who can explain why the land will be completely ruined with the result that everyone will be afraid to travel through it."

¹³Yahweh replied, "These things will happen because my people have rejected my laws which I gave to them; they have not obeyed me or my instructions. ¹⁴Instead, they have stubbornly done the things that they wanted in their inner beings to do. They have worshiped the idols that represent the god Baal, which is what their ancestors did.

¹⁵So now listen to what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God of the Israelites, say: What I will do will be like giving these people bitter things to eat and poison to drink: ¹⁶I will scatter them to many nations which neither they nor their ancestors have known anything about; I will enable their enemies to strike them with swords until I have destroyed them."

¹⁷This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"Think about what is happening,

then summon those women who mourn when someone has died.

¹⁸Tell them to come quickly and start to wail,

with the result that tears will stream down from your eyes.

¹⁹Listen to the people of Jerusalem calling out, saying,

'We have been ruined!

We have experienced a terrible disaster!

Now we are very ashamed,

because our houses have been destroyed by our enemies, and we are being forced to leave our land.'

²⁰You women, listen to what Yahweh says.

Pay attention to his words.

Teach your daughters to wail.

Teach each other how to sing funeral songs.

²¹You must learn to sing funeral songs because people will be dying in your houses and in palaces.

There will be no more children playing in the streets,

there will be no more young men gathering in the city squares.

²²There will be corpses scattered across the fields like dung;
their dead bodies will lie there like grain that has been cut by reapers,
and there will be no one still alive to bury them.

²³Yahweh says this:

“Wise men should not boast about their being wise,
strong men should not boast about their being strong;
and rich people should not boast about their being rich.

²⁴Instead, those who want to boast should boast about their knowing me
and about understanding that I am Yahweh,
that I am kind and just and righteous,
that I faithfully love people,
and that I am delighted with people who act that way.

²⁵⁻²⁶There will be a time when I will punish all those people who have changed their bodies by circumcising them
but who have not changed their inner beings: The Egyptian, the Moab, of Edom, and of the Ammon people groups,
all those who live close to desert areas far from Judah. I will even punish the people of Israel because they are only
circumcised on the outside, and physically, and not on the inside, in their inner self.”

Chapter 10

¹You people of Israel, listen to what Yahweh says:

²“Do not act like the people of other nations act, and do not be terrified by strange things that you see in the sky,
even though they cause the people of other nations to be terrified.

³The customs of the people of other nations are worthless. For example, they cut down a tree in the forest.
Then a skilled worker cuts a section of it and uses his chisel to carve an idol from that section.

⁴Then people decorate the idol with silver and gold.
Then they fasten it securely with nails in order that it will not topple over.

⁵Then the idol stands there like a scarecrow in a field of cucumbers.

It cannot speak,
and people must carry it,
because it cannot walk.

Do not be afraid of idols,
because they cannot harm anyone,

and they cannot do anything good to help anyone.”

⁶Yahweh, there is no one like you.

You are great, and you are very powerful.

⁷You are the king of all the nations!

Everyone should revere you,

because that is what you deserve.

Among all the wise people on the earth

and in all the kingdoms where they live,

there is no one like you.

⁸Those people who think that they are very wise are stupid and foolish.

The idols that they worship are only made of wood!

Those idols certainly cannot teach them anything.

⁹People hammer silver from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz into sheets,

and then they give those sheets of silver and gold to skilled workers to cover the idols.

Then they put on those idols expensive purple robes

that are made by skilled workers.

¹⁰But Yahweh is the only true God;

he is the all-powerful God,

the king who rules forever.

When he is angry, all the earth shakes;

and the people of the nations cannot endure what he does when he is angry with them.

¹¹You Israelite people, tell this to those people: “Those idols did not make the sky and the earth, and they will disappear from the earth.”

¹²But Yahweh made the earth by his power;

he made firm ground to stand on by his wisdom

and stretched out the sky by his understanding.

¹³When he speaks loudly, there is thunder in the sky;

he causes clouds to form over every part of the earth.

He sends lightning with the rain

and releases the winds from his storehouses.

¹⁴People are as senseless as animals and know nothing of what God desires!

those who make idols are always disappointed

because their idols do nothing for them.

The images that they make are not real gods;
they are lifeless.

¹⁵Idols are worthless; they are just objects that make a mockery of the true God;
there will be a time when they all will be destroyed.

¹⁶But the God whom we Israelites worship is not like those idols;
he is the one who created everything that exists;
we, the tribe of Israel, belong to him;
he is the commander of the angel armies.

¹⁷Yahweh says this to the people of Jerusalem:
“The army of your enemies surrounds your city,
so gather up your possessions and prepare to leave the city.

¹⁸I will soon throw you out of this land
and cause you to experience great troubles,
with the result that you will begin to think of me again.”

¹⁹The people replied, “It is as though we have been badly wounded,
and we are very grieved;
It is as though we have a very serious illness,
and we must endure the pain.

²⁰It is as though our great tent is destroyed;
the ropes that held it up have been cut;
our children have gone away from us and will not return;
there are no people left to rebuild our great tent.

²¹Our leaders have become just like animals;
they no longer ask Yahweh to guide them,
so they will no longer prosper,
and all those over whom they rule will be scattered.

²²Listen! Our enemies’ armies in the north are making a very great noise
as they march toward us.
The towns in Judah will be destroyed,
and they will become a place where jackals live.”

²³Yahweh, I know that no person controls what will happen to him;
no one is able to direct the events that he will experience.

²⁴So correct us, but do it gently.

Do not correct us when you are angry,
because we would die if you did that.

²⁵Punish all the nations whose people do not acknowledge that you are God;
punish all the nations whose people do not worship you,
because they are completely destroying us people of Israel
and they are causing our land to soon be only a desert.

Chapter 11

¹This is another message that Yahweh told me: ²"Listen to the agreement that I made with the ancestors of the people of Jerusalem and the other cities in Judah. Then tell that agreement to them again. ³Then tell them that I, Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worship, said that I will curse everyone who does not obey what was written in that agreement that I made with them. ⁴It is the same agreement that I made with their ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt. What happened to them in Egypt was terrible; it was as though they were living in a hot furnace. When I brought them out of Egypt, I told them to obey me, and to do everything that I had commanded them to do. I also told them that if they obeyed me, they would be my people and I would be their God. ⁵Now tell these people that if they obey me, I will do what I promised to do for their ancestors. I will enable them to continue living in this very fertile land in which they now live."

I replied, "Yahweh, I trust you that what you have said will happen."

⁶Then Yahweh said to me, "Go into the streets of Jerusalem and to the other cities in Judah. Proclaim my message to the people. Tell them to listen to the agreement that I made with their ancestors and to obey it. ⁷When I brought their ancestors out of Egypt, I solemnly pleaded with them many times to obey me, and I am still pleading with them now. ⁸But they did not obey me or even pay any attention to me. Everyone continued to be stubborn and to do the evil things that they wanted to do. I commanded them to do what was written in the agreement, but they refused. So I punished them in all the ways that I promised that I would."

⁹Then Yahweh said to me, "The people of Jerusalem and the other cities in Judah are rebelling against me. ¹⁰Their ancestors refused to do what I told them to do, and now these people have returned to committing the sins that their ancestors committed. They are worshiping other gods. The people of Israel disobeyed the agreement that I made with their ancestors, and now the people of Judah have done the same thing. ¹¹So now I, Yahweh, am warning them that I will cause disasters to come to them, and they will not escape. And when they call out for me to help them, I will not pay attention. ¹²When that happens, the people in Jerusalem and other cities in Judah will offer sacrifices and burn incense to their gods and ask for their help, but those gods will not be able to save them when those disasters come to them. ¹³There are now as many gods in Judah as there are towns in Judah; the people of Jerusalem have erected as many altars to burn incense to those gods as there are streets in Jerusalem.

¹⁴Jeremiah, do not pray for these people, and do not plead with me to rescue them. If you plead with me, I will not pay attention; and if they call out to me for help when they are in distress, I will not listen to them."

¹⁵Then Yahweh said,

"The people of Judah whom I love certainly no longer have a right to come to my temple,

because they continually do many evil things.

They think that continually making sacrifices of meat to me certainly will protect them from disasters, with the result that they will be able to rejoice.

¹⁶I previously said that they were like an olive tree full of green leaves

with a lot of good olives on it,

but now I will send their enemies to attack them furiously;

it is as though I will break off their branches, and their city will be destroyed by fire. ¹⁷It is as though the people of Judah and Israel were a beautiful olive tree that I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, planted,

but now, by burning incense to their god Baal, they have caused me to become very angry.

So now I have decided to destroy them."

¹⁸Yahweh revealed to me that my enemies were planning to kill me. ¹⁹Before he did that, I was like a lamb that was being led away to be slaughtered; I did not know what they were planning to do. I did not know that they were saying, "Let us get rid of this tree and its fruit," so I did not know that they intended to kill me, in order that no one would remember me.

²⁰Then I prayed, "Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, you judge people justly,

and you examine everything that we are thinking.

Allow me to watch you getting revenge on the people who want to kill me,

because I trust that you will do for me what is right."

²¹It was the men of my own town, Anathoth, who wanted to kill me, and they told me that they would kill me if I did not stop prophesying what Yahweh told me to say. ²²So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, said about them, "I will punish them. Their young men will be killed in wars, and their children will die because they have no food. ²³I have set a time when I will bring disasters to the people of Anathoth, and when that happens, none of them will remain alive."

Chapter 12

¹Yahweh, whenever I tell you that I am unhappy about what is happening to me,

you always act justly.

So now allow me to ask about one more thing that I do not understand:

Why are wicked people often very prosperous?

Why do things go very well for dishonest people?

²You allow them to prosper

like trees that grow tall and bear a lot of fruit.

They always say good things about you,

but in their inner beings, they are really far from you.

³But Yahweh, you know me very well.

You see what I do and you are able to know what I am thinking.

Set them apart like we separate the sheep out of the herd so
that on the day of slaughter they will be butchered.

⁴This land is becoming very dry and even the grass is withering.

Even the wild animals and the birds have all died
because the people who live in this land are very wicked.

All this has happened because the people have said,
"Yahweh does not know what has happened to us!"

⁵Then to show me that I needed to be prepared to endure even greater difficulties, Yahweh said to me,

"It is as though you have become exhausted from racing against men;

so how will you be able to race against horses?

If you only prepare to run on open ground,

what will happen to you when you are running through the thick foliage near the Jordan River?

⁶Already your brothers and other members of your own family oppose you.

They plot against you and they say bad things about you.

So even if they say nice things about you,
do not trust them!

⁷I have abandoned my Israelite people,

the people whom I chose to belong to me.

I have allowed their enemies to conquer the people whom I love.

⁸My people have become to me like a lion in the forest.

It is as though they roar at me like a lion,
so now I hate them.

⁹My chosen people have become like speckled birds

that are surrounded by vultures waiting to eat their flesh.

Tell all the wild animals to come

and eat the flesh until they are full.

¹⁰Many rulers from other countries have come with their armies and devastated my people
whom I care for like a farmer takes care of his vineyard.

They have caused my beautiful land to become a barren desert where no one lives.

¹¹They have caused it to become completely empty;

So now it is as though I am mourning the death of a loved one.

The whole land is desolate,

and no one worries about it.

¹²The soldiers of our enemies have marched across all the barren hilltops.

But I, Yahweh, am using those armies to punish your land from one end to the other,

and no one will escape.

¹³It is as though my people planted wheat,

but now they are harvesting thorns.

They have become very tired because of much hard work,

but they have gained nothing from all that work.

They will be very disappointed because their harvests will be very small,

and that will happen because I, Yahweh, am extremely angry with them."

¹⁴This is also what Yahweh said to me: "I will punish the evil nearby nations that have been trying to take away the land that I gave to my Israelite people. I will force them to leave their own lands. But I will throw the people of Judah out of their lands, also. ¹⁵But later I will act mercifully toward those nations again, and I will bring them back to their own lands again. Each clan will come back to its own land. ¹⁶And if the people of the other nations whose armies have invaded Israel learn the religious customs of my people, and if they learn that I am listening when they solemnly promise that they will do something, like they taught my people to believe that their god Baal was listening when they made solemn promises, I will cause them to become prosperous, and they also will be my people. ¹⁷But I will expel any nation whose people refuse to obey me, and I will destroy that nation and its people. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 13

¹One day Yahweh said to me, "Go and buy a linen waistcloth. Put it on, but do not wash it." ²So I bought a very nice waistcloth, which is what Yahweh told me to do, and I put it on.

³Then later Yahweh gave me another message. ⁴He said, "Go to the Euphrates River and hide your waistcloth in a crevice in the rocks." ⁵So I went to the river and did what Yahweh told me to do.

⁶A long time later, Yahweh said to me, "Go back to the river and get the waistcloth that I told you to hide there." ⁷So I went to the Euphrates River and dug out the waistcloth from the crevice in which I had hidden it. But it was ruined, and useless.

⁸Then Yahweh gave me this message: ⁹"What happened to your waistcloth shows that I will destroy the things that the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah are very proud of. ¹⁰Those wicked people refuse to pay attention to what I say. They stubbornly do just what they desire to do; they worship other gods. Therefore, they will become completely useless, like your waistcloth. ¹¹Just like a waistcloth clings closely to a man's waist, I wanted the people of Israel and Judah to cling closely to me. I wanted them to be my people, people who would praise me and honor me. But they would not pay attention to me.

¹²So, tell this to them: 'Yahweh, the God whom you Israelite people worship, says that every leather wineskin should be filled with wine.' And when you tell that to them, they will reply, 'Of course we know that all wineskins should be filled with wine!' ¹³And then you must tell them, 'No, that is not what Yahweh means. What he said

means that he will cause this land to be filled with people who are drunk. That will include all of you—the king who sits on the throne that King David previously sat on, the priests and the prophets, and even the common people of Jerusalem.” ¹⁴He is saying, ‘I will cause a drunken brawl among you. Even parents will brawl with their children. I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you at all; pitying you will not prevent me from getting rid of you.’”

¹⁵You people of Judah, pay very careful attention.

Do not be proud, because Yahweh has spoken to you.

¹⁶It is as though he is ready to bring darkness on you

and to cause you to stumble and fall as you walk on the hills when it is becoming dark.

So praise Yahweh your God before that happens.

If you do not do that, you will look for light,

but all you will see is darkness and gloom.

¹⁷And if you still refuse to heed what he says,

what will happen to you because of your being proud will cause me to cry when I am alone.

My eyes will be filled with tears

because you, Yahweh’s people,

whom he takes care of like a shepherd takes care of his flock,

will all be captured by your enemies and taken to other countries.

¹⁸You people of Judah, say to the king and to his mother,

“Come down from sitting on your thrones

and humbly sit in the dirt,

because your enemies will soon snatch from your heads your glorious crowns.”

¹⁹The towns in the southern Judean wilderness will be surrounded by your enemies,

and no one will be able to get through their lines to rescue the people in those towns.

You people of Judah will be captured and taken away;

you will all be exiled.

²⁰You leaders of Jerusalem, open your eyes and look:

the enemy armies are ready to march down from the north.

When that happens, what will happen to the people of Judah who are like a beautiful flock of sheep,

people that he gave to you to take care of?

²¹What will you say when Yahweh appoints people from other countries to rule over you,

people who you mistakenly thought were your friends?

You will suffer very much pain,

like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby.

²²You will ask yourselves, "Why is this happening to us?"

I will reply that it is because of your many sins.

That is why soldiers of the invading armies will lift up the skirts of your women and rape them.

²³A man from Ethiopia certainly cannot change the color of his black skin,
and a leopard certainly cannot change its spots.

Similarly, you cannot start doing what is good,
because you have always done what is evil.

²⁴Yahweh says, "I will scatter you like chaff
that is blown away by the wind from the desert.

²⁵That is what is certainly going to happen to you,
the things that I have determined will happen to you,
because you have forgotten me,
and you are trusting in false gods.

²⁶It is as though I myself will pull your skirts up over your faces
and cause you to be very ashamed because everyone will be able to see your private parts.

²⁷I have seen that you act like men who are eager to commit adultery;
you are like male horses that whinny when they desire to mate with a female horse.

I have seen that you worship disgusting idols in the fields and on the hills.

You people of Jerusalem, terrible things will happen to you because you will not be obedient and live a good life!
How long will it be until you are acceptable to me again?"

Chapter 14

¹After there had been no rain in Judah for a long time, Yahweh gave Jeremiah this message:

²The people in Judah are very distressed;
people are sitting on the ground and mourning;
in all of Jerusalem people are crying loudly.

³The rich people send their servants to wells to get water,
but all the wells are dry.
The servants return with empty pitchers;
they cover their heads

because they are ashamed and humiliated.

⁴The ground is extremely dry and cracked open

because there has been no rain.

The farmers are ashamed that they cannot raise a crop,
so they also cover their heads.

⁵Even the doe abandons her newborn babies,

because there is no grass in the fields for them to eat.

⁶The wild donkeys stand on the barren hills,

panting like thirsty jackals.

They become blind

because there is no grass to eat.

⁷The people say, "Yahweh, if we have turned away from you and sinned many times,
we now know that we are being punished because of our sins!

Please help us

in order that everyone can see that you are very great and keep your promises.

⁸You are the one whom we Israelites confidently expect to do good things for us
when we have many troubles.

So, why do you not help us?

You act as though you are a stranger in our land,
like you are someone who is staying here for only one night.

⁹Are you also surprised about the terrible things that are happening to us?

Why do you act like you are unable to save anyone, even though you are a strong warrior?

Yahweh, you are here among us,
and others know that we are your people,
so do not abandon us!"

¹⁰And this is what Yahweh says to those people:

"You love to wander away from me;
you run from one idol to another.

Therefore, now I will no longer accept you,
and I will punish you for your sins."

¹¹Then Yahweh said to me, "Do not pray for these people anymore. ¹²When they fast, I will not pay any attention. When they bring to me their offerings of animals to be completely burned on the altar and their offerings of flour, I will not accept them. Instead, I will get rid of them by wars, by famines, and by diseases."

¹³Then I replied to him, "Yahweh my God, their prophets are telling the people that they will not experience wars or famines. They are telling the people that you will surely allow us to have peace in our land for many years."

¹⁴Yahweh replied to me, "Those prophets say that they are speaking what I tell them to say, but they are telling lies. I did not send them, so what they are saying is false. They say that they have received visions from me, and that they are telling things that I have revealed to them, but that is not true. They are saying foolish things that they have only thought of themselves. ¹⁵So this is what I say about those prophets who are predicting what will happen, saying that I told them those things: They are saying that we Israelites will not die from wars or famines, but I did not send those prophets. And they themselves will die from wars or from famines. ¹⁶And the people to whom they are predicting these things, they and their wives and their sons and their daughters, will also die from wars or from famines. Their corpses will be thrown into the streets of Jerusalem, and there will not be anyone to bury them. I will punish them like they deserve to be punished.

¹⁷So, Jeremiah, tell this to them about yourself:

'Day and night my eyes are full of tears.

I cannot stop crying.

I cry for my people,

who are very precious to me, as if they were my daughters.

I cry for them because they have been severely wounded;

and they will not recover or heal from this severe wound.

¹⁸If I go out into the fields,

I see corpses of people who have been slaughtered by our enemies.

If I walk along the streets of the city,

I see corpses of people who died from hunger.

The prophets and the priests travel through the land, preaching to people,

but they do not know what they are doing.'"

¹⁹Then I prayed this:

"Yahweh, have you completely rejected the people of Judah?

Do you really despise the people of Jerusalem?

Why have you wounded us very badly,

with the result that we will never be healed?

We hoped that we would have peace,

but there was no peace.

We hoped that there would be a time when we would be healed,

but all that we received were things that terrified us.

²⁰Yahweh, we admit that we are wicked people,
and that our ancestors also did many wicked things.
We have all sinned against you.

²¹But Yahweh, in order that we may honor you,
do not despise us.
Do not dishonor the city where your glorious throne is.
Please do not forget us,
and do not break your agreement with us.

²²Those idols that have been brought from other nations certainly cannot bring rain to us,
and the sky certainly cannot cause rain to fall.
Yahweh our God, you are the only one who can do things like that.
So we will confidently expect you to help us."

Chapter 15

¹Then Yahweh said this to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel could come back from their graves and stand in front of me and plead with me for these Israelite people, I would not act mercifully toward these people. I would tell you to send them away from me. Cause them to leave me! ²And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?', tell them, 'This is what Yahweh says:

The ones that I say must die, will die:

The ones that I say must die in wars, will die in wars.

The ones that I say must die from hunger, will die from hunger.

The ones that I say must be captured and taken to other countries, will be captured and taken to other countries.

³I will send four things that will get rid of them: I will send enemy soldiers using swords to kill them. I will send wild dogs to drag away their corpses. I will send vultures to eat their corpses. And I will send other wild animals to eat what remains of their corpses. ⁴Because of the wicked things that King Manasseh did in Jerusalem, I will cause people in all the kingdoms of the earth to be horrified concerning what will happen in Judah to my people.

⁵You people of Jerusalem, no one will feel sorry for you.

No one will weep for you.

No one will wish that you would not be hurt.

⁶You people have abandoned me;

you have continued to walk away from me.

So, I will lift up my fist to smash you;

I am tired of acting mercifully toward.

⁷At the gates of your cities, I will scatter you like a farmer scatters the chaff from his grain by winnowing it.

You, my people, have refused to turn away from your evil behavior.

So, I will get rid of you,

and I will even cause your children to be killed.

⁸I will cause there to be more widows in Judah
than there are grains of sand on the seashore.

I will bring on you an enemy army
that will destroy your young men and cause their mothers to weep.

I will cause you to suddenly experience great suffering and become very terrified.

⁹A woman who has seven children will become faint and gasp for breath;
it will be as though her daylight will become darkness,
because most of her children will be dead,
and she will be disgraced and humiliated.

And her children who are still alive, I will enable your enemies to kill them.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

¹⁰I said to my mother, “I am very sad;
I wish that you had not given birth to me;
everyone in this land opposes me and quarrels with me.

I have not made anyone angry by lending or borrow money and then quarreling about it,
but everyone curses me anyway.”

¹¹But Yahweh replied to me,
“Jeremiah, I will take care of you.

And at times when you have the most troubles,
I will come on your behalf and protect you from your enemy.

¹²People of Judah, you know how strong iron is when it is mixed with bronze,
it is very hard and good for weapons.

That iron mixed with bronze metal is just like the strength of your enemies when they attack Judah from the north,
no one will be able to stop them.

¹³I will give all the valuable possessions of your people to their enemies,
without them paying for it.

Your people will lose everything valuable
because of all the sins that they have committed throughout the country.

¹⁴I will tell their enemies to force them to become their prisoners,
to take them to other lands that they have not experienced,
and force them to become their slaves.

That will happen because I am extremely angry with your people;
my anger is like a burning fire.”

¹⁵Then I said, “Yahweh, you know what is happening to me.

Please come and help me.

Punish those who are persecuting me.

Please do not continue to be patient with them

and do not allow me to die now.

It is for your sake that I am suffering.

¹⁶Yahweh my God, you are the commander of the angel armies;

when you spoke to me,

I was delighted with your message; it caused me to be joyful,

and I eagerly accepted what you said

because I belong to you.

¹⁷When the people were carousing together,

I never joined them;

I sat alone, because you are the one who controls what I do.

I was very angry with those people because of their sins.

¹⁸So, why do you allow me to continue to suffer?

It seems that my wounds cannot be healed.

Sometimes you help me, sometimes you do not help me.

It seems that you are as undependable as a brook that has water in it only during certain seasons;

you are like a spring that has dried up.”

¹⁹Then Yahweh replied to me saying this:

“If you begin again to trust in me,

I will restore you,

in order that you can continue to serve me.

If you proclaim good messages and not worthless ones,

you will continue to be the one who speaks what I tell you to say.

You must cause the people to pay attention to what you say;
you must not pay attention to what they say.

²⁰They will fight against you,
but I will protect you, like people are protected from their enemies by a bronze wall.
They will not defeat you,
because I will be with you,
and I will protect and rescue you.

²¹Truly, I will keep you safe from those wicked people,
I will rescue you when you are seized by cruel people.
That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 16

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ²“Do not get married and have children in this land, ³because this is what I, Yahweh, say about the children who are born in this city, and about their mothers and fathers: ⁴Many of them will die from terrible diseases. And no one will mourn for them. No one will even bury their corpses; the corpses will lie on the ground, scattered like manure. Others will die in wars or from hunger, and then their corpses will become food for vultures and wild animals.”

⁵This is also what Yahweh said to me: “Do not go to funerals to mourn or to show those whose relatives have died that you feel sorry for them, because I have stopped protecting them, and I have caused that things will not go well for them. I have stopped faithfully loving them and acting mercifully toward them. ⁶Very many people will die in this land, including those who are important and those who are not important. And no one will mourn for them, or even bury their corpses. No one will cut himself or shave his head to show that he is very sad. ⁷No one will bring food to comfort those who are mourning, not even if it is their father or their mother who is mourning. No one will give them a cup of wine to cheer them up.

⁸And do not go into the houses where people are feasting. Do not eat or drink anything with them. ⁹I want you to do this because this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say: ‘While you are still alive and seeing it happen, I will cause there to be no more singing and laughing in this land. There will be no more joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides.’

¹⁰When you tell these things to the people, they will ask, ‘Why has Yahweh declared that these terrible things will happen to us? What have we done for which we deserve to be punished like this? What sin have we committed against Yahweh our God?’

¹¹Then this is what you must tell them that I am replying to them: ‘It is because your ancestors turned away from me, Yahweh. They worshiped other gods and served them. They abandoned me and did not obey my commands.

¹²But you who are living now have done more wicked things than your ancestors did! Each of you stubbornly does the evil things that he desires and refuses to pay attention to what I say. ¹³So, I will throw you out of this land, and I will send you to a land that you and your ancestors have never known about. There you will worship other gods day and night. And I will not act mercifully toward you.’

¹⁴But there will be a time when people who are solemnly promising to do something will no longer say, ‘I will do this, just as surely as Yahweh lives—the one who brought the Israelite people here from Egypt.’ ¹⁵Instead, they will say ‘I will do this, just as surely as Yahweh lives—the one who brought us Israelite people back to our own land,

from the lands to the north and from all the other lands to which he had exiled us.' They will be able to say that because some day I will bring your descendants back to this land that I gave to your ancestors.

¹⁶But now I am summoning your enemies who will seize them like fishermen catch fish. I am summoning those who will search for them on every mountain and hill, and in every cave, like hunters search for animals to kill. ¹⁷I am watching them carefully. I see every sin that they commit. They will not be able to hide from me. ¹⁸Because of all the wicked things that they have done, I will punish them twice as much as I would punish other people. I will do that because they have caused my own land to become unacceptable to me because of their worshiping lifeless statues of detestable gods, and also because they have filled my land with the other evil things that they have done."

¹⁹Then I prayed, saying, "Yahweh, you are the one who strengthens me and protects me; you are the one to whom I go when I have troubles.

Some day people from nations all over the world will come to you and say,

'Our ancestors left us only something that was false;
they worshiped idols that are completely worthless.

²⁰No one can make their own gods;
the gods that they make are only idols; they are not real gods."

²¹Then Yahweh said, "Now I will show my power to the people of Judah;
I will show them that I am truly very powerful.

Then, finally, they will know that I, Yahweh, am the true God."

Chapter 17

¹Yahweh said, "It is as though a list of the sins committed by the people of Judah is engraved with an iron chisel, or engraved using the fine point of a very hard stone,
on their inner beings and on the altars where they worship their idols.

²Even their children remember when they went to the altars,
and they went up to the poles that represent the goddess Asherah,
and there they worshiped underneath all the big trees
and on all the high hills.

³I will give my mountain as plunder, along with all your wealth and all your treasures,
because of your idolatry and your worship on the hills.
They will take your possessions away
because you sinned against Yahweh throughout your land.

⁴The wonderful land that I gave to you will no longer belong to you.
I will tell your enemies to take you to a land that you do not know about,
and you will become their slaves.

I will do that because I am extremely angry with you;
my being angry is like a fire that will burn forever.”

⁵This is also what Yahweh says:

“Those who trust in human beings to help them are cursed,
those who rely on their own strength
and turn away from me with their inner beings.

⁶They are like dry bushes in the desert,
they are people who will not experience any good things.
Those people will live in the barren desert
in a salty area, where no one can safely abide.

⁷But Yahweh is pleased with those who trust in him,
and who confidently expect him to take care of them.

⁸Those people are like fruit trees that have been planted along a riverbank,
trees that have roots that go down into the wet ground beside the water.
They are trees whose leaves remain green when it becomes hot,
trees that continue to bear fruit when there are many months in which there is no rain.

⁹Human minds are extremely corrupt,
and we cannot change that.
It is also completely impossible for anyone to understand that.

¹⁰But I, Yahweh, search what is in everyone's inner being,
and I examine what they are thinking.
I will give all people reward or punishment,
what they deserve for what they have done.”

¹¹I know some people who become rich by doing things that are unjust.
They are like birds that hatch eggs that they did not lay.
So, when those people have lived only half of the years that they expect to live, they will disappear.
Then other people will realize that those people have been foolish.

¹²Yahweh, your temple is like a glorious throne
that has been on a high hill since it was built.

¹³You are the one whom we Israelite people confidently expect to bless us,
and all those who turn away from you will be disgraced and feel what it is like to be separated from you,

because they have abandoned you, who are like a fountain where people obtain fresh water.

¹⁴Yahweh, please heal me, because if you heal me, I will truly be healed.

If you rescue me, I will truly be safe, because you are the only one whom I praise.

¹⁵People often ridicule me and say,

"You tell us messages that you say came from Yahweh,

but why have the things that you predicted not happened?

¹⁶Yahweh, you appointed me to take care of your people like a shepherd takes care of his sheep; I have not abandoned that work,

and you know that I have not previously wanted this time of disaster to come to people who ridicule me.

And you know everything that I have said to your people.

¹⁷Do not cause me to be terrified!

When disasters come, you are the one to whom I will go to be safe.

¹⁸So now, cause those who persecute me to be ashamed and dismayed,

but do not do things to me that will cause me to be ashamed and dismayed.

Cause them to be terrified!

Do to them many things that will completely destroy them!

¹⁹This is what Yahweh said to me: "Go to the city gates in Jerusalem. First go to the gate where the kings of Judah go in and out of the city, and then go to each of the other gates. ²⁰Say to the people at each gate, 'You kings of Judah and everyone else who is living in Jerusalem and all you other people of Judah who enter these gates, listen to this message from Yahweh! ²¹He says, "Listen to this warning carefully if you want to live! Stop doing work on Sabbath days! Stop carrying loads through these gates on those days! ²²Do not carry loads out of your houses or do any other work on Sabbath days! Instead, cause Sabbath days to be holy. I commanded your ancestors to do that, ²³but they did not listen to me or obey me. When I did things to correct them, they stubbornly refused to pay attention to what I said or to accept it. ²⁴But I say that if you obey me, and if you do not carry loads through these gates on Sabbath days or do any other work on Sabbath days, and if you dedicate the Sabbath days to me, ²⁵kings of Judah and their officials will continue to go in and out of these gates. There will always be someone who is a descendant of King David ruling here in Jerusalem. Kings and their officials will go in and out of these gates, riding in chariots and on horses, and there will be people living in this city forever. ²⁶And people will come to Jerusalem bringing offerings to be completely burned on the altar and other offerings. They will bring to the temple grain offerings and incense and offerings to thank me. People will bring these offerings from the towns in Judah and the villages near Jerusalem and from the land where the tribe of Benjamin lives and from the western foothills and from the southern Judean wilderness. ²⁷But if you do not pay attention to what I say, and if you refuse to dedicate the Sabbath days to me, and if you continue to carry loads through these gates into the city on Sabbath days, I will burn these gates completely. The fire will spread to the palaces, and no one will be able to put out that fire.'"

Chapter 18

¹Yahweh gave another message to me. He said, ²"Go to the shop of the man who makes clay pots. I will give you a message there." ³So I went to that shop, and I saw the man who makes pots. He was working at the wheel that he

uses to form pots. ⁴But when he finished making one jar, it was not as good as he hoped it to be. So, he took the clay and formed it into another jar, shaping it as he desired to.

⁵Then Yahweh gave me this message: ⁶"Perhaps the people of Israel think that I cannot do to them like this man who makes pots has done. But what they think is wrong. I can control what happens to them like this man controls what he does with the clay in his hands. ⁷There may be a time when I proclaim that I will get rid of a nation or kingdom, like someone pulls up a plant with its roots, and smash it, and destroy it. ⁸But if the people of that nation repent of doing evil things, I will not send to them the disasters that I planned to send. ⁹And there may be a time when I proclaim that I will establish a nation or kingdom and cause it to be strong. ¹⁰But if the people of that nation start to do evil things and refuse to obey me, then I will not bless them as I said that I would do.

¹¹Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all the people in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh says: I am planning a disaster that I will send to you. So, each of you should turn from your evil behavior and start doing what is right, in order that good things will come to you instead!'

¹²But the people will say back to you, 'It is useless for you to say these things to us. We will continue to be stubborn and behave as wickedly as we want to.'

¹³So this is what Yahweh said in response:

"Ask the people who live in other nations if they have ever heard of such a thing.

My Israelite people, who have been pure like virgins, have done a terrible thing!

¹⁴The snow certainly never completely disappears from the rocky slopes of the mountains in Lebanon.

The cold streams that flow down from those distant mountains never cease flowing.

¹⁵But my people are not as reliable as those streams:

They have abandoned me.

They burn incense to honor worthless idols.

It is as though they have stumbled as they walked along well known and reliable roads

and now, instead, they are walking on dirt paths.

¹⁶Therefore, their land will become desolate,

and people who see it will hiss to ridicule it from now on.

All the people who pass by will be appalled;

they will shake their heads to show that they are shocked.

¹⁷I will scatter the people when their enemies attack them

like dust is scattered by an east wind.

And when they experience all these disasters,

I will turn my back on them and refuse to help them."

¹⁸Then the people said, "Come, we should plan to attack Jeremiah. We have many priests who teach us God's laws, wise men who give us good advice, and prophets who tell us what will happen. We do not need Jeremiah! So we should slander him and not pay attention to anything that he says."

¹⁹Then I prayed, "Yahweh, please listen to me!

And listen to what my enemies are saying about me.

²⁰I am doing things that are good,

so it is disgusting that they are paying me back by doing evil things to me.

It is as though they have dug a pit for me to fall into and die.

Do not forget that one time I stood in front of you and pleaded for you to help them,

and I tried to prevent you from punishing them, even though you were very angry with them.

²¹So now, allow their children to die from hunger!

Or cause them to be killed by their enemies' swords!

Cause their wives to become widows, whose children are all dead!

Cause their husbands to be killed in battles!

²²Cause people to scream in their homes

when enemy soldiers suddenly come into their houses!

Cause all these things to happen to them because they want to kill me.

It is as though they have dug a pit for me to fall into,

and they have hidden traps along my path.

²³Yahweh, you know all the things that they are planning to do to kill me.

Do not forgive them for their crimes

or blot out the record of their sins.

Cause them to be destroyed;

punish them because of your being angry with them!"

Chapter 19

¹This is another message that Yahweh gave to me: "Go and buy a clay jar from a man who makes them. Then take with you some of the elders of the people and leaders of the priests. ²Go out of the city past the Broken Pottery Gate, to the place overlooking the dump for broken pottery in the Hinnom Valley. Then give them a message. ³Say to them, 'This message is for you kings of Judah and other people of Jerusalem. Listen to what Yahweh is saying! The God of Israel, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says that he will bring a terrible disaster on Jerusalem. Those who hear about it will be stunned. ⁴That will happen because you Israelite people have stopped worshipping me, and have caused this place to be a place where you worship foreign gods. You burn sacrifices to gods that neither you nor your ancestors nor even the kings of Judah ever heard about. And you have filled this place with the blood of innocent people whom you have killed. ⁵You have built houses on the top of many hills to honor your god Baal, and at those places you have killed your own children and offered them to be sacrifices to Baal. I never commanded you to do that, I never spoke about doing that, and never even considered allowing that! ⁶So, beware, because I, Yahweh, say that there will be a time when this garbage dump will no longer be called Topheth or Hinnom Valley; it will be called Slaughter Valley. ⁷In this place I will ruin the plans of you people who live in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. I will allow your enemies who want to kill you to kill many of you with their swords. Then I will allow your corpses to remain on the ground to be food for vultures and wild animals. ⁸I will

completely destroy Jerusalem and cause it to become a heap of ruins that people will despise. All the people who pass by will be appalled, and they will be shocked when they see that the city has been destroyed. ⁹I will enable your enemies who want to kill you to surround the city for a long time. Then the food will be all gone, and you people will be extremely hungry, with the result that you people in the city will eat the flesh of your own children and your neighbors' children.'

¹⁰Jeremiah, after you tell that to them, while the people who are with you are watching, smash the jar that you brought. ¹¹Then say to them, 'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: Just like this jar has been smashed and cannot be repaired, I will smash this city of Jerusalem and other places in Judah. You will bury some of your corpses here in this dump, until there is no more space to bury any more corpses. ¹²That is what I will do to this city and to you people who live here. I will make you unfit to worship me, and this city will be like you, just as Topheth is. ¹³The houses in Jerusalem and the palaces of the kings of Judah will be unfit, like this place will be. All the houses where you burned incense on the rooftops to honor the stars that you worshiped, and where you poured out wine to be an offering to your gods, will become unfit for anyone who worships me to live in.'"

¹⁴Then I returned from the garbage dump where Yahweh had sent me to tell them that message, and I stood in the courtyard of Yahweh's temple and said this to all the people who were there: ¹⁵"This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: 'I will bring a disaster to this city and to the villages around it like I promised, because you people have stubbornly refused to pay attention to what I said to you.'"

Chapter 20

¹Pashhur son of Immer, was a priest who supervised the temple guards. He heard these things that I had prophesied. ²So he arrested me. Then he commanded guards to whip me and fasten my feet in stocks at the Benjamin Gate of Yahweh's temple. ³The next day, when Pashhur released me, I said to him, "Pashhur, Yahweh is giving you a new name. From now on, your name will be 'Surrounded by Terror,' ⁴because Yahweh says this to you: 'I will cause you and your loved ones to be terrified. You will watch them being killed by your enemies' swords. I will enable the army of the king of Babylon to capture the people of Judah. Those soldiers will take some of the people to Babylon, and they will kill others with their swords. ⁵And I will enable their soldiers to take away other things in Jerusalem: all your wealth and the produce of your hard work. They will take to Babylon all the very valuable things that belonged to your kings. ⁶And as for you, Pashhur, they will take you and all your family to Babylon. You and your family and all your friends who have prophesied things that are lies will die there and be buried there.'"

⁷One day I said this to Yahweh:

"Yahweh, when you chose me to be a prophet, you deceived me so that I would agree to do this work.

You forced me to become a prophet.

But now everyone ridicules me.

They make fun of me all the day.

⁸When I tell people your messages, I shout saying,

'Yahweh is going to cause you to experience violence and destruction!'

So because I tell them those messages from you,

they insult me and scoff at me all the day.

⁹But if I would say, 'I will never mention Yahweh or say anything about him, '

it would be as though your message would burn in my inner being like a fire;

it would be like a fire in my bones.

Sometimes I try to remain silent and not proclaim your messages,

but I am not able to do that.

¹⁰I hear many people whispering about me,

saying 'He is the man who proclaims that there will be things that cause us to be terrified everywhere.

We must tell the authorities what he is saying! We must denounce him!'

Even my best friends are waiting for me to say something that is wrong.

They are saying, 'Perhaps we can cause him to say something wrong,

and if he does, we will be able to defeat him.'

¹¹But you, Yahweh, are helping me like a strong warrior,

so it is as though he will cause those who persecute me to stumble, and they will not defeat me.

They will be completely disgraced because of being unable to gain any advantage over me;

and other people will never forget that they were disgraced.

¹²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

you examine all those who are righteous;

you know all that is in their inner beings and what they think.

Allow me to see you getting revenge on those who want to harm me,

because I came to you to petition for what is right."

¹³Sing to Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh!

He rescues poor and needy people,

from those who are wicked.

¹⁴But I hope that the day that I was born will be cursed.

I do not want anyone to celebrate that day when my mother gave birth to me.

¹⁵And as for that man who brought to my father the news,

and caused him to be very happy, by saying

"Your wife has given birth to a son for you,"

I hope that he also will be cursed.

¹⁶Allow him to be destroyed like the cities that Yahweh destroyed long ago,

without acting mercifully toward them.

Cause that man to hear the people wailing in the morning,

and to hear the enemy soldiers shout their battle cries at noon.

¹⁷I want that to happen to him because he did not kill me when I was born.

I wish that I had died in my mother's womb,

and that my mother's body would have been like my grave.

¹⁸I have continually experienced much trouble and sorrow,

and I am disgraced now when I am about to die;

why was it necessary for me to be born?

Chapter 21

¹Yahweh gave me another message when King Zedekiah of Judah sent a man named Pashhur son of Malkijah, and a priest named Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, to talk to me. They pleaded with me, saying, ²"The army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is attacking Judah. Please speak to Yahweh for us. Ask him if he will help us. Perhaps he will force Nebuchadnezzar's army to leave by performing a miracle for us, like the miracles he performed previously."

³I replied to them, "Go back to King Zedekiah. Tell him, ⁴This is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says: "I will cause your weapons to be useless in fighting against the king of Babylon and his army that is outside the walls of Jerusalem, attacking. I will enable them to enter into the center of this city. ⁵I myself will fight against your army with my very great power, because I am very angry with you. ⁶I will send a very terrible plague on the people of this city, and on their domestic animals, and many of them will die." ⁷And Yahweh says there are many people in this city who want to kill you. So, he will enable the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and other people in this city to capture you, King Zedekiah, and your officials, and all the other people who do not die from the plague. His army will slaughter your soldiers; they will not act mercifully toward you or pity you at all.'

⁸And tell this to all the people: 'Yahweh says that you must decide whether you want to die or to remain alive.

⁹Everyone who remains in Jerusalem will die. They will be killed in battles or die from being hungry or from diseases. But those who surrender to the army of Babylon that is surrounding your city will remain alive. They will escape dying. ¹⁰This will happen because I, Yahweh, have decided to cause this city to experience disasters, not to experience something good. The army of the king of Babylon will capture this city and will destroy it completely by fire."

¹¹Yahweh also told me to say this to the family of the king of Judah: "Listen to this message from Yahweh! ¹²This is what he says to you descendants of King David:

'Every day, make fair decisions for the people whom you judge.

Help those who have been robbed.

Rescue them from robbers and abusers.

If you do not do that,

I will be angry and punish you with a fire that will be impossible to extinguish,

because of all the sins that you have committed.

¹³I will fight against you people of Jerusalem,

you who live on top of a rocky hill above the valley.

I will fight against you people who boast, saying,

“No one can attack us and break through our defenses.”

¹⁴I will punish you for your wicked deeds like you deserve to be punished;

It will be as though I will light a fire in your forests

that will burn up everything around you.”

Chapter 22

¹This is another message that Yahweh gave to me: “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and say this to him:

²You are the king of Judah. You are the ruler, like King David was. You and your officials and your people must listen ³to what Yahweh says: “Act fairly and justly. Do what is right. Help those who have been robbed. Rescue people from those who oppress them. Stop doing evil deeds. Do not mistreat those who have come here from other countries, and do not mistreat orphans and widows. Stop murdering here in Jerusalem. ⁴If you obey these commands carefully, there will always be some descendant of King David who will be ruling here in Jerusalem. The king and his officials and other people will ride through the gates of the city in chariots and on horses. ⁵But if you refuse to pay attention to these commands, I, Yahweh, solemnly declare, that this palace will become a pile of rubble.””

⁶And this is what Yahweh says about the house of the king of Judah:

“I like this palace, like I like the forests in the region of Gilead

and the mountains in Lebanon.

But I will cause this palace to become a desert,

a place that no one lives in.

⁷I will select troops who will destroy this palace;

each soldier will use his own tools to wreck the building.

They will cut into pieces the beautiful big cedar beams

and throw them into a fire.”

⁸People from many nations will walk past the ruins of this city and say to each other, “Why did Yahweh destroy this city that was very great?” ⁹And other people will reply, “He did it because his people stopped obeying the agreement that they had made with Yahweh their God. Instead, they worshiped other gods.”

¹⁰Yahweh also says, “Do not mourn for King Josiah;

do not cry because he has died.

Instead, mourn for King Jehoahaz, his son,

because he will be captured and taken to another country,

and he will never return to see his own country, Judah, again.”

¹¹Jehoahaz became king after his father, King Josiah, died, but Jehoahaz was captured and taken to Babylonia. And this is what Yahweh says about him: “He also will never return to Judah. ¹²He will die in that country where they have taken him as a captive and will never see his own country again.”

¹³And Yahweh said to me, "Terrible things will happen to King Jehoahaz's brother, King Jehoiakim.

He unjustly forced men to build his palace.

The rooms on the upper level were built by men who were forced unjustly to do that work;

he forced his neighbors to work for nothing;

he did not pay them anything.

¹⁴He said, 'I will force my workers to build a huge beautiful palace

with very large rooms and many windows.

They will cover the walls with fragrant cedar panels

and paint them bright red."

¹⁵But it is certainly not having a beautiful cedar palace that causes a king to be great!

Jehoiakim's father, Josiah, also had plenty of things to eat and drink.

But Josiah always did things that are right and just,

and that is why God blessed him.

¹⁶Josiah acted justly and helped poor and needy people,

so things went well for him.

Yahweh says, "That is the way a person should behave who knows me.

¹⁷But Jehoiakim, you are greedy and desire only to obtain things by acting dishonestly.

You murder innocent people,

you oppress poor people,

and you treat people cruelly and violently."

¹⁸Therefore, this is what Yahweh says about Jehoiakim son of King Josiah:

"When he dies, people will not mourn for him.

They will not say to each other, 'It is very sad; we are so sorry!'

The people whom he ruled will not mourn for him, saying,

'We are sad that our king is dead; we are so sorry that the wonderful things that happened while he was king are ended.'

¹⁹When he dies, people will do to his corpse what they do to a dead donkey;

his corpse will be dragged out of Jerusalem and dumped outside the gates!

²⁰You people of Judah, go to the mountains in Lebanon and weep,

shout in the mountains of the Bashan region,

call out in mourning in the mountains of Moab,

because all your friends in those areas have been destroyed.

²¹When you were prosperous, I warned you,
but you replied, 'We will not pay attention to what you say.'
You have been acting like that since you were young;
you have never obeyed me.

²²So, now I will punish all your leaders;
it will be as though they have been blown away by the wind.
They will be captured by your enemies and taken to another country.
When that happens, you will truly be ashamed and disgraced
because of all the wicked things that you have done.

²³Now, your king enjoys living in the cedar rooms in his palace,
but soon he will be punished,
and then he will groan
like a woman who is giving birth to a baby."

²⁴Yahweh says this: "Jehoiachin son of King Jehoiakim of Judah, as surely as I am alive, I will punish you. Even if you were the ring on my finger that shows that I am the king, I would pull you off. ²⁵You are afraid of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his huge army, because they are wanting to kill you. I will enable them to capture you. ²⁶I will expel you and your mother from this land, and you will be taken to another country. Neither of you were born there, but you will both die there. ²⁷You will never return to this land that you will very much desire to return to."

²⁸Someone said, "Jehoiachin will be like a broken pot
that is despised and which no one wants.
He and his children will be exiled to a foreign land.

²⁹I want the people in this land to listen carefully to this message from Yahweh.

³⁰This is what Yahweh says:

"In the record about the kings of Judah, write down that it will be as though this man Jehoiachin had no children,
and that he has not been successful during his life,
because none of his children will ever become king
to rule over the people of Judah."

Chapter 23

¹Yahweh declares, "Terrible things will happen to the leaders of my people—those who are like shepherds of the people who are like my sheep—because they have scattered my people and sent them away, and have not taken care of them. ²So, this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worship, say to those leaders: 'Instead of taking care of my people and leading them to places where they are safe like a shepherd does for his sheep, you have scattered them. So I will punish you for the evil things that you have done. ³But later I will gather those who

are still alive, from the countries where I have forced them to go. I will bring them back to their own country, where they will have many children, and their number will increase. ⁴Then I will appoint other leaders for my people, leaders who will take care of them. And my people will never be afraid of anything again, and none of them will be like a lost sheep that has been driven off by its shepherd.”

⁵Yahweh also says,

“Some day I will appoint for you a righteous man
who will be a descendant of King David.

As king, he will do what is just and right for all the people in the nation.

⁶At that time, he will save all the Israelite people from their enemies,
and they will be safe.

And his name will be

‘Yahweh, the one who does what is right for us.’”

⁷Yahweh also says that at that time, people who are solemnly promising to do something will no longer say, “I will do it as surely as Yahweh lives, who rescued the Israelite people from Egypt.” ⁸Instead, they will say, “I will do it as surely as Yahweh lives, who brought us Israelite people back to our own land, from the land to the northeast and from all the other countries to which he had exiled us.” And they will live in their own land again.

⁹I am very sad in my deepest emotions because of the sacred message that Yahweh has spoken about what will happen to the false prophets;

it is as though all my bones shake.

I stagger like a man who is drunk

after drinking a lot of wine,

¹⁰The land is full of people who commit adultery;

and Yahweh has cursed the land.

Even the pastures in the desert are all dried up,

because the people do what is evil,

and the false prophets use their power to do things that are not just.

¹¹Yahweh says, “Even the priests and the prophets are ungodly;

they do wicked things even in his temple.

¹²Therefore, it will be as though the paths that they walk on are slippery.

It will be as though they are being chased in the darkness,

and there they will fall down,

because I will cause them to experience disasters

at the time that I will punish them.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

¹³Previously I saw that the prophets in Samaria were doing something that was wrong; they were prophesying, saying that Baal gave them the messages that they were proclaiming, and they were deceiving my people.

¹⁴And now I have seen the prophets in Jerusalem doing terrible things.

They commit adultery
and habitually tell lies.

They encourage evil people to continue to do evil things,
with the result that the people do not stop sinning.

Those prophets are as wicked as the people in Sodom and Gomorrah were.

¹⁵So, this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says about those false prophets:

"I will give those prophets bitter things to eat
and poison to drink,
because it is because of them that this land is filled with people who do wicked deeds."

¹⁶This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"Do not pay any attention to what those false prophets say to you,
because they are just fooling you.

They tell you about visions that they have only thought in their own minds,
not about visions that I have given them.

¹⁷They habitually say to those who hate me,

'Yahweh says that you will have peace.'

And they say to those who stubbornly do what they want to do,
'Nothing bad will happen to you because of your doing those things.'

¹⁸But none of them has ever been in a council meeting in heaven
in order to listen to a message from me.

None of them has paid attention to anything that Yahweh has said.

¹⁹So, Yahweh will punish them; it will be like a great storm;
it will come down like a whirlwind, swirling around the heads of those wicked people.

²⁰Yahweh will not stop being angry
until he has completely accomplished all that he has planned.

In the future, you will understand all of this clearly."

²¹Yahweh also says, "I have not appointed those prophets,

but they run around telling people their messages.

I did not speak to them,

but they continue to prophesy.

²²If they had been in my council meetings,

they would have been able to speak messages from me,

and they would have caused people to turn away from committing evil deeds. "

²³Yahweh also says, "Am I a God who is only nearby?

No, I am a God who is far away, also.

²⁴So, no one can hide in some secret place

with the result that I cannot see him.

I am everywhere, in heaven and on the earth!

That is what I, Yahweh, say!

²⁵I have heard those prophets prophesy lies, saying that they are telling people messages from me. They say, 'Listen to me tell you the dream I received from God last night! I really had this dream!' ²⁶How long will they continue to do this? How long will those lying prophets continue to prophesy things that come only from their own minds? ²⁷They think that because of the dreams that they tell to each other, people will forget me, like their ancestors forgot about me when they started to worship Baal. ²⁸Allow those false prophets to tell people their dreams, but those who have messages that really come from me should proclaim those messages faithfully. I, Yahweh, say that like straw and grain are certainly very different, my messages and the message from those false prophets are certainly very different. ²⁹It is as though my messages burn like a fire and is like a hammer that smashes rocks into pieces when it affects someone's heart.

³⁰Therefore, I, Yahweh say, I oppose all those prophets who steal messages from each other and claim that those messages came from me. ³¹I oppose those prophets who speak their own messages but claim that those messages came from me. ³²I oppose those prophets who falsely say that I told them something in a vision, but they are only telling lies that cause my people to sin. I did not send those prophets. I did not even appoint them to be prophets. And they have no messages that will benefit my people at all. That is what I, Yahweh, declare."

³³Yahweh said to me, "If one of those prophets or priests or one of the other people asks you, 'What problem has Yahweh told you about now?', you must reply, 'He has not given me anything to say to you! Instead, Yahweh says that he will abandon you!' ³⁴And if any prophet or priest or anyone else falsely says, 'I have a prophecy from Yahweh,' I will punish that person and his family. ³⁵What you should continually ask each other is, 'When you spoke to Yahweh, what did he reply? What is he saying to us?' ³⁶But instead you are only concerned with your own ideas and with twisting the true message from the true God, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom we worship. ³⁷This is what you should ask each prophet: 'What did Yahweh reply when you talked to him? What is he saying to us?' ³⁸If he replies, 'What I told you is a prophecy from Yahweh' then let him know I will punish him, because I told my true prophets not to give any messages to this people right now.

³⁹So I, Yahweh, will get rid of you false prophets. I will expel you from my presence. And I will get rid of this city that I gave to you and to your ancestors.

⁴⁰I will cause people to make fun of you forever. People will never forget that you were disgraced."

Chapter 24

¹The army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and his officials, and all his skilled workers and took them to Babylon. After that happened, Yahweh gave me a vision. In the vision I saw two baskets of figs that had been placed in front of the temple. ²One basket was full of good figs, like the kind that ripen first. The other basket was filled with figs that were bad, with the result that they could not be eaten.

³Then Yahweh said to me, "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I replied, "I see some figs. Some are very good ones, but some are very bad, with the result that no one would eat them."

⁴Then Yahweh gave me this message: ⁵"This is what I, Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people say that they worship, say: The good figs represent the people of Judah whom I exiled to Babylonia. I sent them there for their own good. ⁶and I will not exile them again, instead I will bring them back to this land and let them build up houses and cities again. They will be like plants that grow and prosper and are never cut down. ⁷I will enable them to desire to know in their inner beings that I am Yahweh. They will be my people, and I will be their God, because they will return to me sincerely.

⁸But I, Yahweh, also say, the bad figs represent Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his officials, and all the other people who remain in Jerusalem, and those who have gone to Egypt. I will do to them like people do to rotten figs. ⁹I will cause them to experience calamities, with the result that people in every nation on the earth will be horrified, and will hate them because they are evil people. Wherever I scatter them, people will make fun of them, and say that they are disgraced, and ridicule them, and curse them. ¹⁰And I will cause them to experience wars and famines and diseases, until they have disappeared from Israel, this land which I gave to them and to their ancestors."

Chapter 25

¹After Jehoiakim had been ruling Judah for almost four years, Yahweh gave me this message for all the people of Judah. It was during the year that King Nebuchadnezzar started to rule in Babylon. ²Jeremiah spoke this message to all the people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah: ³"Yahweh has been giving me messages for twenty-three years. He started giving me messages when Josiah son of Amon, had been ruling Judah for almost thirteen years. And I have faithfully told you those messages, but you have not paid any attention to them.

⁴Many times Yahweh has sent to you the prophets who served him, but you have not listened to them or paid any attention to what they said. ⁵Each time their message was this: 'Turn from all your evil behavior, from all the evil things that you have continually been doing. If you do that, you will be able to stay in this land that Yahweh gave to you and to your ancestors, to belong to you forever. ⁶Do not cause Yahweh to become angry by serving and worshiping idols that you have made with your hands. If you do not cause him to be angry, he will not punish you.'

⁷And Yahweh says, 'But you would not pay attention to the messages that I gave to those prophets. You caused me to become extremely angry by your worshiping idols that you had made with your own hands. That resulted in my punishing you.

⁸So now, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say that because you have not paid attention to what I said, ⁹I will gather all the armies of the nations that will come from the northeast. I have appointed King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to lead them. I have appointed him to do my work for me. I will bring those armies to attack this land, all the people living in it, and even nearby countries. I will completely destroy them, and cause them to be places that people are horrified about, and that people will ridicule, places that will be ruined forever. ¹⁰I will cause happy singing and laughing to cease in your land. There will no longer be brides and bridegrooms talking joyfully. There will not be the sound of people grinding grain with millstones. There will be no lamps lit in your houses. ¹¹All of this

land will become a desert where no one will live. And the people of Israel and of the nearby countries will be exiled to Babylonia and work for the kings of Babylon for seventy years.

¹²Then, after they have been in Babylonia for seventy years, I will punish the king of Babylonia and his people for the sins that they have committed. I will cause Babylonia to become a wasteland forever. ¹³I will cause them to experience all the terrible things that Jeremiah has written about—all the punishments that he predicted will happen to all those nations. ¹⁴The leaders of many nations will cause the people of Babylonia to become their slaves, like the people of Babylonia caused my people to become slaves. I will punish them like they deserve for having caused my people to suffer.”

¹⁵Then Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave me a vision. In the vision he was holding a cup of wine. He said, “Take from me this cup that is full of wine that represents punishment. I will cause all the leaders of the nations to which I will send you to drink some of the wine in this cup. ¹⁶When they drink the wine, they will stagger and act like crazy people, because they will realize that I will massacre many of their people with swords.”

¹⁷So, in the vision, I took that cup full of wine from Yahweh, and I took it to all the nations to which he sent me, and caused the leaders of those nations to drink some of that wine. ¹⁸I went to Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah, and the king and the other officials drank some of the wine from that cup. And, starting from that day, they all eventually were removed from having authority, and became people whom others ridiculed, who were despised, and cursed. ¹⁹In the vision Egypt had to drink some of the wine, including the king and his officials and many of his people, ²⁰and foreigners who were living there. In the vision the land of Uz and the cities and kings of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod had to drink some of the wine. ²¹Then the vision about the kings of Edom, Moab, and Ammon began. ²²Then there were more visions about the kings of the cities of Tyre and Sidon across the Mediterranean Sea, about the kings who had to drink some of the wine. ²³In the vision the religious leaders of the cities of Dedan, Tema, and Buz, which were cities in Arabia and other distant places, they had to drink some of the wine. ²⁴In the vision other places in Arabia and the kings of tribes in the desert ²⁵and the kings of the Zimri, Elam, and Media people groups, ²⁶and kings in countries to the north that are near to Israel and to countries that are far from Israel, one after the other—all the kingdoms in the world had to drink, and finally the king of Babylon had to drink some of the wine.

²⁷Then in the vision Yahweh said to me, “Tell them that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Drink from this cup some of the wine that represents the punishment that I will give you. Drink a lot of it and become drunk and vomit. You will fall down and not get up again, because I will cause you to be killed in wars that I will send to you. ²⁸If any of those to whom you give this wine refuse to drink it, tell them that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies says that they must drink it. ²⁹I am starting to bring disaster to my own people. They will not be exempt from punishment, for I am sending wars to all the nations on the earth. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, have said it.’

³⁰Now tell them all those things that I have said, and also say this to them:

‘Yahweh will shout to them from the highest places like a lion roars!

He will call out with a shout from the holy place where he lives!

He will roar like a lion against his people because of their sins!

Like those who shout so loudly when they are treading the grapes,

he will shout so that everyone who lives on the earth can hear him!

³¹Even people in very remote places around the earth will hear him shouting,

because he will say why he will judge and punish all the nations.

He will cause the wicked people to be slaughtered with swords.

That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.'

³²Then tell them that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

'Listen to this!

Disasters will happen to one nation after another.

Punishment from me will arise like a great storm

from the most distant places on the earth.

³³When that happens, the corpses of those whom I have caused to be slaughtered will fill the earth from the east to the west.

And no one will mourn for them, and no one will gather their corpses to bury them. They will be scattered on the ground like manure.

³⁴You evil leaders, they call out for someone to help them!

You who were the leaders of my people, fell down and and they rolled in the dust.

Now is time for you to be slaughtered!

You will fall down and be shattered like a fragile vase shatters when it falls to the ground.

³⁵Those who should have taken care of my people will not find any place to hide;

there will be no place for the leaders of my people to find safety.

³⁶You are the ones who take care of my people now crying out for help, and those who were the leaders of my people they cry and beg for help—

while I, Yahweh, am destroying your nation.

³⁷Your peaceful meadows will become a wasteland

because Yahweh will severely punish it.

³⁸Yahweh will leave his dwelling like a lion leaves its den to attack other animals,

and he will cause your land to become desolate.

He is very angry with you and will make your enemies angry at you.'"

Chapter 26

¹Soon after Jehoiakim son of Josiah, became the king of Judah, Yahweh gave me this message: ²"This is what I, Yahweh, am telling you: Stand in the courtyard in front of my temple, and speak to all the people from the various towns in Judah who come there to worship me. Tell them everything that I tell you; do not leave out anything. ³If you do tell them everything, perhaps they will pay attention, and each one of them will turn away from his evil behavior. Then I will change my mind, and not bring on them the disaster that I was planning to bring on them because of the evil things that they have done. ⁴⁻⁵Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh says: I sent to you the prophets who serve me, to tell you what you should do. I sent them to you many times, but you have not paid attention to what they said. If you will not pay attention to what I say and do not obey the message that I have given to you, and if you do not pay attention to what the prophets say, ⁶I will destroy this temple like I destroyed Shiloh, the place where the sacred tent was put. And I will cause Jerusalem to be a place whose name people in every nation on the earth will say when they curse someone.'"

⁷Jeremiah did what Yahweh told him to do. The priests, the false prophets, and many other people listened to him as he told them that message outside the temple. ⁸But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling them everything that Yahweh had commanded him to say, they all seized him and said, "You must be executed! ⁹Why are you prophesying that this temple will be destroyed like Shiloh was destroyed? Why are you saying that this city will be destroyed, and that no one will live here anymore? All the people surrounded Jeremiah as he stood in front of the temple.

¹⁰When the officials of Judah heard about all this that was happening, they rushed from the palace and sat down at the gate of the temple named The New Gate, to judge Jeremiah's case. ¹¹The priests and the prophets told the officials and the other people who were there, "This man should be executed, because he has prophesied that this city will be destroyed, and you yourselves have heard him say that!"

¹²Then Jeremiah replied to the officials and the other people. He said to them, "Yahweh sent me to prophesy all the things that you heard me say about what will happen to this temple and this city. ¹³But if you change your behavior and stop sinning, and start to obey Yahweh our God, he will change his mind, and not send to you the disasters that he said that he would send. ¹⁴As for me, I am not able to free myself from your grasp. So you can do to me whatever you want to do. ¹⁵But you need to know that if you kill me, you will be killing a man who is innocent. And you and everyone else in this city will be guilty, because the truth is that it was Yahweh who sent me to speak every word that you have heard me say."

¹⁶Then the officials and the other people said to the priests and the false prophets, "This man does not deserve to be executed, because he has spoken to us the message that Yahweh gave him!"

¹⁷Then some of the elders stood up and spoke to all the people who were gathered there. ¹⁸They said, "Remember what Micah, the prophet from Moresheth, prophesied during the years that Hezekiah was the king of Judah. He told the people of Judah this:

'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

Some day Mount Zion will be plowed like fields are plowed;

Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins.

There will be a large clump of trees on top of the hill where the temple is now.' ¹⁹But did Hezekiah or anyone else in Judah kill Micah for saying that? No! Instead, Hezekiah revered Yahweh, and pleaded that he would act mercifully toward them. So, Yahweh changed his mind about sending to them the terrible disaster that he said he would send. And now if we kill Jeremiah, we are going to bring even worse disaster on ourselves!"

²⁰At that time, Uriah son of Shemaiah from the city of Kiriath Jearim was also prophesying from Yahweh. He was predicting that the city and the rest of the land would experience the same disasters that Jeremiah was predicting.

²¹When King Jehoiakim and his army officers and officials heard what Uriah was saying, the king sent someone to kill Uriah. But Uriah heard about it, and became very afraid, and he escaped to Egypt. ²²Then King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Acbor along with several other men to Egypt. ²³They captured Uriah and took him back to Jerusalem to King Jehoiakim. The king then commanded a soldier to kill Uriah with a sword. Then they buried his corpse in a place where poor people are buried. ²⁴However, Ahikam son of Shaphan defended me, and persuaded the officials not to allow the mob to murder Jeremiah.

Chapter 27

¹Soon after Zedekiah son of Josiah became the king of Judah, Yahweh gave a message to me. ²This is what he said to me: "Make a yoke and bonds, then fasten them around your own neck. ³Then send them to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, and give them to the ambassadors from those countries who have come to Jerusalem to talk to King Zedekiah. ⁴Tell them to give this message to their kings: This is what Yahweh, commander

of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says: ⁵With my very great power I created the earth and the people and the animals that are on the earth. And I can give those things to anyone whom I want to. ⁶And now I am going to enable King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who does what I want him to do, to control your countries. I am going to enable him to rule everything, even the wild animals. ⁷The people of all the nations will work for him, and later for his son, and later for his grandson, until the time for them to rule is finished. Then the armies of many great kings from many nations will conquer Babylon.'

⁸But now I tell you that you must do what the king of Babylon wants you to do, like an ox that has a yoke on its neck must do what its master wants it to do. I will punish any nation that refuses to do that. I will cause those people to experience war and famine and diseases, until the armies of Babylon have conquered that nation. ⁹So, do not pay attention to your false prophets and fortune tellers and people who predict what will happen by working magic or by talking with spirits of dead people. Those people say not to serve him because the king of Babylon will not conquer your country. ¹⁰Those people are all liars. If you believe what they say, it will result in your being exiled from your land. I will cause you to be taken from your land, and you will die far away. ¹¹But the people of any country who do what the king of Babylon wants them to do will remain in their own country and be able to plant their crops as they always have done. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹²After I gave that message to those ambassadors, I gave the same message to King Zedekiah of Judah. I said to him, "If you want to remain alive, do what the king of Babylon and his officials want you to do. ¹³It would be foolish for you not to do that, because the result would be that you and your people would die by your enemies' swords or by famine or diseases, which Yahweh will cause any nation to experience that refuses to allow the king of Babylon to rule them. ¹⁴Do not pay attention to those prophets who say to you, 'Do not obey the king of Babylon since he will not conquer your country.' They are liars. ¹⁵This is what Yahweh says: 'I have not appointed those prophets. They are saying that I gave them messages, but they are lying. So, if you believe them, I will expel you from this land. And you and all those prophets will die in Babylon!'"

¹⁶Then I spoke to the priests and the other people, and I said, "This is what Yahweh says: 'Do not believe your prophets who tell you that all the gold items that were taken from my temple by soldiers from Babylon will soon be returned from Babylon, because what they are prophesying is a lie. ¹⁷Do not pay attention to what they say. Surrender to the king of Babylon. If you do that, you will remain alive. If you do not do that, this entire city will be destroyed. ¹⁸If they are really prophets who speak messages from me, tell them to plead to me, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, that the soldiers from Babylon will not be allowed to take away to Babylon the valuable items that still remain in the temple and in the king's palace and in the other palaces in Jerusalem. ¹⁹I say this because the huge pillars that are in front of the temple and the large tank that was called "The Sea" and the ten water carts and all the other items that are used for offering sacrifices are still in this city. ²⁰King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon left those things here when he exiled Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, to Babylon, along with all the other leaders of Jerusalem and the leaders of other places in Judah. ²¹Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this about all those valuable things that are still outside the temple and in the palace of the king of Judah: ²²They will all be carried away to Babylon. And they will stay there until I say that they should be brought back to Jerusalem. Then they will be brought back here. That is what I, Yahweh, say."

Chapter 28

¹These things occurred when Zedekiah was beginning his rule as king of Judah. It happened on the fourth year and fifth month of his rule, that Azzur's son Hananiah, a prophet from the city of Gibeon, spoke to Jeremiah in the courtyard of the temple, while all the priests and other people were listening. He said, ²"This is what the Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says: 'I will cause the king of Babylon to stop ruling you.

³Within two years, I will cause to be brought back to this temple all the valuable things that King Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took from this temple and took to Babylon. ⁴And I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin, who was the son of the Jehoiakim, the King of Judah, and all the other people who were captured and taken to Babylon. The king of Babylon has forced you to do what he wants, like someone puts a yoke on the neck of an ox to force it to do what he wants it to do. But I will cause that to end. That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.'"

⁵Jeremiah replied to Hananiah in front of all the priests and other people whom were standing outside the temple. ⁶He said, "I want that to be true! I desire that what you have predicted will happen just as you said! I hope that he will cause men from Babylon to bring back all the valuable things that were in this temple, and all the people who were taken to Babylon. ⁷But now listen to what I say to you while all these people are listening. ⁸Many years ago, those who were prophets before you and I became prophets spoke messages about many nations and great kingdoms. They predicted that wars and disasters and plagues would occur in those nations. ⁹So now you or any other prophet who predicts that things will go well for us must show that your message is correct. Only if what you predict actually happens will we know that you were truly appointed by Yahweh."

¹⁰Then Hananiah took the yoke off my neck and broke it. ¹¹Then he said this to all the people who were there: "This is what Yahweh says: 'Just like Hananiah has broken this yoke, within two years I will cause King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to stop forcing the people to do what he wants, which has been like a heavy yoke on all their necks.'" After Hananiah said that, Jeremiah left the temple area.

¹²Soon after Hananiah had broken the yoke that was around the neck of Jeremiah, Yahweh gave this message to me: ¹³"Go and say this to Hananiah: 'Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says that you have broken a wooden yoke, but that he will replace it with an iron yoke. ¹⁴I have forced the people of all these nations to become slaves of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. That is like an iron yoke around their necks. I have put everything, even wild animals, under his control.'"

¹⁵Then Jeremiah went to Hananiah and said to him, "Hananiah, listen to this: Yahweh has not appointed you; instead, you have told lies to the people, and they have believed your lies. ¹⁶Therefore, this is what Yahweh says: 'You will soon die. Before the end of this year, you will die, because you have encouraged people to act against Yahweh.'"

¹⁷Hananiah died two months later.

Chapter 29

¹⁻²After King Jehoiachin, his mother, his palace officials, other officials in Judah and Jerusalem, and all the various kinds of craftsmen had been exiled to Babylon, Jeremiah wrote a letter to the elders, the priests, the prophets and all the other people who had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon by soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar. ³He gave the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan, and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, when they were about to go to Babylon to be ambassadors from King Zedekiah to King Nebuchadnezzar. This is the letter that Jeremiah wrote, the message that Yahweh gave him.

⁴This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says to all you people who were captured here in Jerusalem and taken there to Babylon: ⁵"Build houses there, and plan to stay there because you will be there for many years. Plant gardens, and eat the food that is produced in the gardens. ⁶Get married and have children. Then when they grow up, choose wives for your sons, and husbands for your daughters, in order that they also may have children. In that way, the number of your people will increase, not decrease. ⁷Also, do things that will cause things to go well for the other people there in the city where I sent you. Pray that things will go well for the people in that city, because if things go well for them, things will go well for you, also."

⁸This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "There are false prophets and fortune tellers among you. Do not allow them to deceive you. Do not pay attention to them when they tell you their dreams, ⁹because they are telling you lies, saying that I have given them the messages that they are telling you. But, I have not appointed them."

¹⁰This is also what Yahweh says: "After you and your children have been in Babylon for seventy years, I will help you, and do for you the things that I promised, and I will enable you to return here to Jerusalem. ¹¹I, Yahweh, know what I have planned for you. I am planning to cause things to go well for you, not to cause you to experience disasters. I am planning to give you many things that you can confidently expect to receive in the future that your

people will survive to see. ¹²At that time, when you go to worship me and call out my name in prayer, I will listen to what you pray. ¹³If you earnestly desire for me to bless you, you will see that I will answer you. ¹⁴I will help you. I will cause you to no longer be slaves in Babylon. I will gather you from all the nations to which I have exiled you, and I will bring you back here to your own land, to the place from which you were taken."

¹⁵Some of you say that Yahweh has appointed prophets for you there in Babylon. ¹⁶But this is what Yahweh says about the king who rules here in Jerusalem, and about all the other people who are still living here—your relatives who were not taken to Babylon with you. ¹⁷Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this: "I will cause them to experience wars and famines and diseases. I will cause them to become like bad figs that are very rotten, with the result that no one can eat them. ¹⁸I will not stop causing them to experience wars and famines and diseases. And I will scatter them all around the world. In every country where I force them to be taken, I will cause them to be people whom others curse and be horrified about and mock. ¹⁹That will happen because they have refused to pay attention to my messages, messages that I gave to the prophets whom I sent to them. And you who have been exiled to Babylon have not paid attention to them, either." That is what Yahweh says.

²⁰Therefore, you people who have been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon, listen to this message from Yahweh.

²¹This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah, and about Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are telling lies to you, saying that they are giving messages from him: "They will be seized and taken to King Nebuchadnezzar, who will cause them to be executed while you are watching. ²²Because of what will happen to them, all you people who have been taken from Judah to Babylon will say this when they curse someone: 'I hope that Yahweh will do to you the same thing that he did to Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon caused to be killed by being burned in a fire.' ²³They have done terrible things to my Israelite people. They have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken lies, saying that they were messages from me. They have said things that I did not tell them to say, and I, Yahweh, have heard them say those things."

²⁴Yahweh told me to send this message to Shemaiah, a man from Nehelam who was living in Babylon: ²⁵"This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "You wrote a letter that no one told you to write. You sent it to Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, and you sent copies to the other priests and all the other people here in Jerusalem. This is what you wrote to him:

²⁶Zephaniah, Yahweh has appointed you to be the priest instead of Jehoiada, to supervise those who work in the temple. Anyone who acts like a crazy man and who claims that he is a prophet, you should put his arms and legs and head into stocks. ²⁷So why have you not done anything to stop Jeremiah, the man from Anathoth, who pretends that he is a prophet among you? ²⁸He sent a letter to us who are here in Babylon, saying that we will be here for a long time. He said that therefore we should build houses and plan to stay here, and plant gardens, and eat the food that is produced in the gardens."

²⁹But when Zephaniah the priest received the letter from you, he brought it to me and read it to me. ³⁰Then Yahweh gave me this message: ³¹"Send this message to all the people from Judah who are there in Babylon: Say that this is what Yahweh says about Shemaiah, the man from Nehelam: 'I did not appoint him, but he has deceived you and caused you to believe the lies that he prophesied. ³²So, I will punish him and his family. He has incited you to rebel against me. Because of that, all of his descendants will soon die. I will do many good things for you, my people, but he and his descendants will not see those things, because they will be dead. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

Chapter 30

¹Yahweh gave Jeremiah another message. He said, ²"I, Yahweh, the God of Israel am telling you to write down everything that I have said to you. ³I want you to know that some day I will free my people, the people of Israel and Judah, from being slaves in Babylon. I will bring them back to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and this land will belong to them again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

⁴Yahweh gave to me another message concerning the people of Israel and Judah. ⁵This is what he said:
"I hear people screaming because they are terrified;
there is no peace in the land.
⁶But think about this:
Men certainly do not give birth to babies.
Therefore, why do strong men stand there,
with their faces very white,
with their hands pressed against their stomachs,
like women who are about to give birth to babies?
⁷Terrible things will soon happen;
That will be a terrible day!
There has never been such a time.
It will be a time when my Israelite people will experience great trouble,
but finally they will be saved from their sufferings."
⁸Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:
"At that time it will be as though I will sever the ropes that are around my people,
and I will free them from being slaves.
People in other countries will no longer enslave them.
⁹My people will again serve me, Yahweh, their God,
and they will serve a king who is a descendant of King David;
and I will appoint this king for them.
¹⁰So, you people of Israel who serve me,
do not be dismayed now,
because some day I will bring you back from distant places;
I will bring your descendants back home from the land where they had been exiled.
Then you Israelite people will again live peacefully and safely,
and there will not be any nation that will cause you to be terrified.
¹¹I, Yahweh, say that I will be with you and will rescue you;
I will completely destroy the nations to which I have scattered you.
But I will not completely destroy you.
I will punish you for your many sins, but I will punish you only as severely as you deserve:

I would be doing wrong if I did not to punish you at all.”

¹²Yahweh also says this:

“You have suffered very much;

it is as though you have a terrible wound that cannot be cured.

¹³There is no one to help you,

no one to put a bandage on your wound.

There is no medicine that will heal you.

¹⁴All your allies have deserted you

and they do not want to help you anymore.

It is true that I have punished you severely,

like your enemies would wound you,

because you have committed many sins

and you are very guilty.

¹⁵Because that is true, why do you protest about my punishing you,

as though I had caused a wound that could not be cured?

It was necessary for me to punish you,

because you had committed many sins

and you were very guilty.

¹⁶But some day all those who are trying to destroy you will be destroyed;

all your enemies will be exiled to other nations.

All those who have stolen things from you

will have their valuable possessions stolen,

and all those who attack you will be attacked.

¹⁷Everyone says that you are outcasts,

and that you live in Jerusalem, a city that no one cares about.”

But Yahweh says,

“I will heal your injuries

and cause you to be healthy again.”

¹⁸This is what Yahweh says:

“I will bring the people of Israel back from the lands to which they were taken

and enable them to possess their land and their houses again.

When that happens, Jerusalem will be rebuilt on top of its ruins,
and the king's palace will be rebuilt as a place of justice.

¹⁹People will again sing joyfully to thank me,
and I will cause there to be more people in Jerusalem, not fewer;
I will cause them to be honored, not despised.

²⁰Their children will prosper like they did before.
I will cause them to be a group of people who worship me,
and I will punish any nation that oppresses them.

²¹One of their own people will be their king,
and I will invite him to come close to me to worship me,
because no one would dare to come close to me
if I did not invite him.

²²You Israelite people will be my people,
and I will be your God."

²³Yahweh will punish your enemies;
it will be like a great storm;
it will come down like a whirlwind, swirling around the heads of wicked people.

²⁴He will not stop being angry
until he completely accomplishes all that he has planned.
In the future, you will understand all of this clearly.

Chapter 31

¹Yahweh says that at that time, he will be the God who is worshiped by all the clans in Israel, and they will be his people.

²This is what Yahweh says:
"Those people who remained alive and were not killed by their enemies' swords
were blessed by me even in the desert;
where they survived.

³Long ago I, Yahweh, said to your ancestors, the Israelite people,
'I have loved you and I will continue to love you forever.
By faithfully loving you I have brought you close to myself.'

⁴And now I tell you, my Israelite people who I will think of like a chaste woman, that I will cause you to be a nation again.

You will joyfully dance as you play your tambourines.

⁵Again you will plant your vineyards on the hills of Samaria,
and you will eat the grapes that grow there.

⁶There will be a time when watchmen will call out from the hills of Samaria,
'Come, let us go up to Jerusalem
to worship Yahweh, our God!'"

⁷And now Yahweh also says this:

"Sing joyfully about what I have done for the people of Israel!

Shout about your nation, the greatest nation!

Shout joyfully, praising me and saying,

'Yahweh, has rescued his people,
the ones who were still alive!'

⁸Do that because I will bring them back from the northeast,
from the most distant places on the earth.
Among them will be blind people and lame people,
women who are pregnant and women who are having labor pains.
They will be a huge group of people!

⁹They will be weeping as they return,
and they will be praying to me.

I will guide them along streams of water,
on level paths where they will not stumble.

I will do this because I am like a father to the Israelite people;
it is as though Israel is my oldest son."

¹⁰People in the nations of the world, listen to this message from Yahweh.
Then proclaim it to people who live along the coasts far away.
Yahweh scattered his people, but he will gather them again and will take care of them
like a shepherd takes care of his sheep.

¹¹Yahweh will buy his Israelite people back
from those who conquered them because they were more powerful than his people.

¹²Yahweh's people will return to Jerusalem

and shout joyfully on the slopes of Zion Hill.

They will rejoice about the things that Yahweh has abundantly given to them—

grain and new wine and olive oil

and young sheep and cattle.

They themselves will be like a well-watered garden,

and they will no longer feel worn out.

¹³The young women will dance joyfully,

and all the men, young ones and old ones, will join with them.

I will cause them to rejoice instead of mourning;

I will comfort them and cause them to be happy instead of being sad.

¹⁴The priests will have plenty of things to eat and drink,

and all my people will be filled with the good things that I give them.

That will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

¹⁵Yahweh also says this:

"Women were weeping in Ramah, on the border between Israel and Judah;

they were mourning and crying very loudly.

The women who were the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two grandsons of Rachel the wife of Jacob, were weeping about their children,

and no one could comfort them

because their children were all dead.

¹⁶But now this is what Yahweh says:

'Do not cry anymore,

because I will reward you for the good things you have done for your children.

Your children will return from the land where their enemies have taken them.

¹⁷I, Yahweh, am telling you that there are things that you can confidently expect me to do for you in the future.

Your children will return to their own land.'

¹⁸I have heard the people of Israel grieving very much and saying to me,

'You punished us severely,

like calves are beaten by their owners to train them for pulling a plow.

So bring us back to obey you again,

because we are ready to return to you,

because you alone are Yahweh, our God.

¹⁹We turned away from you,
but we repented;
after you caused us to realize that we were guilty.

We beat our hands on our legs to show that we were very ashamed of the sins that we committed when we were young.'

²⁰But I, Yahweh, say this:

The Israelite people certainly are still my dear children.

It is often necessary for me to threaten to punish them,
but I still love them.

That is why I have not forgotten them,
and I will certainly act mercifully toward them.

²¹You Israelite people, set up road signs;
put up posts along the roads
to mark the road on which you walked when you were taken from Jerusalem.
My precious Israelite people,
come back to your towns here.

²²You people who have been like daughters who have forsaken their parents,
how long will you continue to wander away from me?

I, Yahweh, will cause something to happen on the earth that is new:

the women of Israel will be protecting their husbands as they travel back here!"

²³This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "When I bring them back from the countries to which they have been exiled, all the people from the towns in Judah will again say, 'I hope that Yahweh will bless this my home, the holy place where righteous people will live!' ²⁴The people of Judah who live in the towns, including the farmers and the shepherds, will all live together peacefully. ²⁵I will enable weary people to be refreshed with drinks of water, and enable people who are very exhausted to become strong again."

²⁶I, Jeremiah, woke up after dreaming all those things, and I looked around. I had slept very delightfully!

²⁷Then Yahweh said to me, "There will be a time when I will greatly increase the number of people and the number of livestock here in Israel and Judah. ²⁸Previously, I caused their enemies to remove the people from their land and to destroy their land and to bring many disasters to it. But in the future, I will enable them to build houses and to plant crops here in Israel again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it. ²⁹Previously the people often said, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, but it is the children's teeth that ache.' They meant that it was not fair for them to be punished for their ancestors' sins. But when I bring them back to their land, they will no longer say that.

³⁰But now all people will die because of the sins that they themselves have committed. It will be more like 'The person who eats sour grapes will have his own teeth aching.' ³¹I, Yahweh, say this: 'There will be a time when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³²This new agreement will not be

like the agreement that I made with their ancestors when I took them by their hands and led them out of Egypt. They disobeyed that agreement, even though I loved them like husbands love their wives.’ ³³This is what I, Yahweh, say: ‘This is the new agreement that I will make with the people of Israel some day: I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their inner beings. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴And it will not be necessary for them to teach their neighbors or their relatives and say, “You need to know Yahweh,” because everyone, including both unimportant people and very important people, will already know me. And I will forgive them for having been very wicked, and I will never think again about the sins that they have committed.”’

³⁵Yahweh is the one who causes the sun to give light during the day,
and who causes the moon and the stars to give light during the night.

He stirs up the seas, with the result that waves roar.

His name is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

and this is what he says:

³⁶“I will not permanently reject my Israelite people
any more than I will get rid of the laws that control the universe.

³⁷And this is what I say:

‘No one can measure the sky

and no one can find out what is supporting the earth.

Similarly, I cannot reject the descendants of Jacob

because of all the evil things that they have done.’

That is certain, because I, Yahweh, have said it!

³⁸I, Yahweh, also say that there will be a time when everything in Jerusalem will be rebuilt for me, from the tower of Hananel at the northeast corner, west to the gate named the Corner Gate. ³⁹Workers will stretch a measuring line over Gareb Hill all the way southwest to Goah. ⁴⁰And the whole area, including the place where corpses and ashes are thrown in the Kidron Valley, and all the fields to the east as far as the Horse Gate, will become set apart for me. And the city of Jerusalem will never again be captured or destroyed.”

Chapter 32

¹After Zedekiah had been ruling Judah for almost ten years, Yahweh gave me another message, during the time that Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling Babylonia for almost eighteen years. ²His army had surrounded Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was in a prison area in the courtyard where the guards of the king’s palace stayed. ³King Zedekiah had put me there. I continued to prophesy there about what would happen. I continued to say, “Yahweh says that he is about to allow the army of the king of Babylon to capture this city. ⁴And the soldiers of Babylonia will most definitely capture King Zedekiah and take him to the king of Babylon for a face to face encounter. ⁵Then his soldiers will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and he will remain there until I arrange for him to be punished. And if he tries to fight against the soldiers from Babylonia, he will not succeed.” King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah why he continued to say that, but Yahweh had said this would be so.

⁶At that time, Yahweh gave Jeremiah another message. He said, ⁷“Your cousin Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle, will come to you. He will say to you, ‘Buy my field at Anathoth, your hometown. Because you are my closest relative, it is written in our laws that you have the right to buy it before I ask if anyone else wants to buy it.”’

⁸And just as Yahweh had predicted, my cousin Hanamel came to see me in the courtyard of the palace. He said, "Please buy my field at Anathoth in the area where the descendants of Benjamin live. It is written in our laws that you have the right to buy it before I ask if anyone else wants to buy it." When he said that, I knew that the message that I had received was truly from Yahweh.

⁹So, I bought the field at Anathoth. I paid Hanamel almost two hundred grams of silver for it. ¹⁰I signed the paper on which it was written that I was buying it, while others were watching. Then I weighed the silver and gave it to him. ¹¹Then I took two copies of the paper. One was sealed and the other was not sealed. On both of them was written the price and conditions of the purchase. I took both copies ¹²and I gave them to Baruch son of Neraiah, and the grandson of Mahseiah. I did this while my cousin Hanamel, the other witnesses who had signed the paper, and other men of Judah who were there in the courtyard, were watching.

¹³Then, while they were all listening, I said to Baruch, ¹⁴"This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: 'Take both copies of this paper and put them in a clay jar, to preserve them for a long time. ¹⁵Do that because this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: Some day people will again own property in this land, and they will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields.'"

¹⁶After I had given the papers to Baruch, I prayed to Yahweh, saying this: ¹⁷"Yahweh, you are my Lord! You made the sky and the earth by your very great power. Nothing is too difficult for you to do. ¹⁸You show thousands of people that you will always be faithful to your covenant with them, but people suffer the consequences of the sins that their parents have committed. You are the great and powerful God. You are Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. ¹⁹You make wise plans and you do mighty deeds. You see how all people behave, and you do to them what they deserve. ²⁰You performed many miracles in Egypt, and you continue to perform miracles here in Israel and everywhere else in the world. Because of that, you have become very famous. ²¹You brought our Israelite ancestors out of Egypt by performing many great miracles, using your very great power, causing our enemies to be terrified. ²²You gave to us Israelite people this land that you solemnly promised to give to our ancestors, a land that is very fertile. ²³Our ancestors came here and conquered this land and started to live in it, but they refused to obey you or to do what you commanded them to do. Because of that, you have caused them to experience all these disasters.

²⁴And now, the army of Babylonia has built ramps up against our city walls in order to attack our city. Because of our enemies' swords and because of famines and diseases, they will be able to conquer it easily. The things that you said would happen have now happened. ²⁵And it is evident that the Babylonian army will soon conquer this city. So now, I do not understand why you told me to buy this field with my silver, while others were watching. It seems that I have just been wasting my money by doing that!"

²⁶Then Yahweh gave me this message: ²⁷"I am Yahweh, the God who rules over every living thing in the world. There is absolutely nothing that is too difficult for me to do. ²⁸So, this is what I say: It is true that I will enable the Babylonian army and King Nebuchadnezzar to capture this city. ²⁹The soldiers of Babylonia who are now outside the walls around the city will enter and burn this city. They will burn down all the houses where people caused me to become angry by burning incense on the tops of their roofs to honor Baal and by pouring out offerings of wine to other gods.

³⁰The people of Israel and Judah have continually done only evil things from the time that they became a nation. They have caused me to become very angry by all their evil deeds. ³¹From the time that this city was built until now, the people of this city have done only things that caused me to be very angry. So now I will destroy it. ³²The people of Israel and Judah, including their kings, their officials, the priests, the false prophets, and all the other people in Jerusalem have committed many sins that have caused me to become angry. ³³My people have turned away from me and have refused to return to me. Even though I taught them things many times, they would not pay attention to what I taught them, and they would not obey me. ³⁴They have set up their detestable idols even in my own temple and defiled it. ³⁵They have built on the hilltops places to worship Baal in Ben Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem, and there they sacrifice their sons and daughters to their god Molech. I never commanded them to do

such horrible deeds. I never even considered ordering such a terrible thing. And by doing it they have caused all the people of Judah to be guilty of having sinned.”

³⁶“But now I will say something more about this city. You people of Jerusalem have been saying, ‘The army of the king of Babylon will conquer it, either by their swords or because of famines or diseases.’ But this is what I, the God of Israel, say: ³⁷I will certainly bring my people back here again, from all the countries to which I will force them to go because I am extremely angry with them. I will bring them back to this city and allow them to live here safely. ³⁸They will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹I will give them one way of thinking and behaving, in order that they may revere me, for their good and for the good of their descendants. ⁴⁰I will make an agreement with them that will last forever: I will never stop doing good things for them, and they will always honor me; they will never stop worshipping me. ⁴¹I will be happy to do good things for them, and I will surely enable them to return to this land and remain here; I will do that with all my inner being and all my strength.’

⁴²And this is also what I, Yahweh, say: ‘I have caused them to experience all these disasters. Similarly, some day I will do for them all the good things that I have promised. ⁴³By buying land you, Jeremiah, have predicted that some day people will buy and sell fields in this land about which you people of Jerusalem now say, “The Babylonian soldiers have destroyed it. It is now desolate. It is a land where there are no longer any people or animals.” ⁴⁴But some day people will again buy and sell fields here. People will sign documents about buying those fields, and other people will witness them doing that. That will happen in the land where the descendants of Benjamin live and here in the villages near Jerusalem, in other towns in Judah, in the hill country and in the foothills to the west, and in the southern Judean wilderness. Some day I will cause them to prosper again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”’

Chapter 33

¹While Jeremiah was still being guarded in the courtyard of the palace, Yahweh gave him this second message:

²“This is what I, the one who made the earth, who formed it and put it in its place, say to the people of Jerusalem: ‘My name is Yahweh. ³Call out to me, and then I will tell you great and wonderful things that you have not known before.’ ⁴This is what I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, say: ‘The men in this city have torn down some of their houses, and even parts of the king’s palace, to get materials to strengthen the walls around the city, in order that the soldiers of Babylonia would not be able to break through the walls after they climb up the ramps that they have built against the walls, and kill the inhabitants with their swords. ⁵You are expecting to fight against the army from Babylonia, but what will happen is that the houses of this city will be filled with the corpses of the men of this city whom I will allow to be killed because I am extremely angry with them. I have abandoned them because of all the wicked things that they have done.

⁶However, there will be a time when I will cause the people in this city to be healthy and strong again. I will enable them to be prosperous and have peace. ⁷I will bring the people of Judah and Israel back from the lands to which they were exiled. I will enable them to rebuild their towns. ⁸I will get rid of their guilt for all the sins that they have committed against me, and I will forgive them for their sin of rebelling against me. ⁹When that happens, all the nations of the world will rejoice, and they will praise me and honor me. They will hear about all the good things that I have done for this city and, because of that, they will revere me, and they will tremble because I have caused the people in this city to have peace and to prosper.’

¹⁰And this is also what I, Yahweh, say: ‘You people have said that this is a land where there are no longer any people or animals. But in the streets of Jerusalem that are now completely empty, and in the other towns in Judah,

¹¹some day people will again be happy and laugh. Brides and bridegrooms will again sing joyfully. And many other people will also sing joyfully as they bring their offerings to me to thank me for what I have done for them. They will sing this song:

“We thank you, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

because you are good to us.

You faithfully hold to your covenant with us forever.”

They will sing that because I will cause the people of this land to be as prosperous as they were before.’

¹²This land is now desolate. There are no people or animals living here. But I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say this: ‘In this land there will again be pastures where shepherds will lead their sheep ¹³Shepherds will again count their sheep as the sheep walk by, outside the towns in the hill country, in the western foothills, in the southern Judean wilderness, in the land where the descendants of Benjamin live, around Jerusalem, and outside all the other towns in Judah.’ That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

¹⁴Listen to this! I, Yahweh, say that there will be a time when I will do for the people of Israel and Judah all the good things that I promised to do for them.

¹⁵At that time I will appoint a righteous man who will be a descendant of King David.

Throughout the land, he will do what is just and right.

¹⁶At that time, the people of Judah will be rescued from their enemies,
and the people of Jerusalem will be safe.

And people will say that the name of the city is ‘Yahweh is the one who does right for us.’ ¹⁷And this is also what I, Yahweh, say: ‘There will be descendants of King David ruling Israel forever. ¹⁸And there will always be priests who are descendants of Levi who stand in front of me and offer sacrifices that will be completely burned on the altar and who will burn food offerings and other sacrifices.’”

¹⁹Then Yahweh gave Jeremiah this message: ²⁰“This is what I, Yahweh, say: ‘You certainly cannot annul my promise to cause nighttime to follow daytime each day. ²¹Similarly, you cannot annul the promise that I made with King David, who served me well, that there will always be descendants of his who will rule Judah. The same is true for my agreement with the descendants of Levi who are priests who do work for me. ²²No one can count the stars in the sky, and no one can count the grains of sand at the seashore. Similarly, I will cause there to be a huge number of descendants of David and descendants of Levi who will work for me.’”

²³Yahweh gave another message to me. He said, ²⁴“Surely you know that some people are saying, ‘Yahweh chose two groups, the people of Judah and the people of Israel, and later abandoned them.’ The people who are saying this are despising my people; they are saying that Israel no longer deserves to be considered a nation. ²⁵But this is what I say: ‘I will not reject my people any quicker than I will change my laws that control the day and the night, the sky and the earth. ²⁶Similarly, I will never abandon the descendants of David or the other descendants of Jacob, and I will always allow descendants of David to rule the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will bring them back to their land, and I will act mercifully toward them.’”

Chapter 34

¹King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with the armies of all the kingdoms that he ruled, and they fought against Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah. At that time, Yahweh gave me this message: ²“Go to Zedekiah the King of Judah, and say to him, ‘This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: “I am about to enable the army of the king of Babylon to capture this city, and they will burn it down. ³You will not escape from them; they will capture you and take you to the king of Babylon. You will meet him and speak with him face to face; then they will take you to Babylon.”’

⁴But King Zedekiah, listen to what Yahweh has promised: “You will not be killed in a battle; ⁵you will die peacefully. When you die, people will burn incense to honor you just as they did for your ancestors who were kings before you became king. They will mourn for you, calling out, ‘We are very sad that our king is dead!’ I, Yahweh, promise that will happen.””

⁶So I took that message to King Zedekiah. ⁷At that time the army of Babylonia had surrounded Jerusalem and Lachish and Azekah. Those three cities were the only three cities in Judah that had high walls around them that still had not been captured.

⁸King Zedekiah had decreed that the people must free their slaves. ⁹He decreed that the people must free their Hebrew slaves, both the men slaves and the women slaves. No one would be allowed to force a fellow Jew to continue to be his slave. ¹⁰The officials and the rest of the people had obeyed what the king decreed, ¹¹but later they changed their minds. They forced the men and women whom they had freed to become their slaves again.

¹²So Yahweh gave me this message to tell to them: ¹³"I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, made an agreement with your ancestors long ago, when I rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. ¹⁴I told them that they must free all their Hebrew slaves after the slaves had worked for them for six years. But your ancestors did not pay any attention to what I said. ¹⁵Recently, you obeyed my command and stopped doing what was wrong and did what was right. You made a solemn agreement at my temple that you would free your slaves, and then you freed them. ¹⁶But now you have disregarded what you solemnly promised, and you have shown contempt for what I said by taking back the women and men whom you had freed and said they could live wherever they wanted to. Now you have forced them to be your slaves again.

¹⁷Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, say: 'Because you have not obeyed me by freeing your fellow Israelites, I will free you to be destroyed by the swords of your enemies and by famines and diseases. All the nations of the earth will be horrified because of what happens to you. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹Because you have disregarded what I said in my agreement with you, I will do to you just what you did to the calves that you cut in half to show that you would surely do what you solemnly promised that you would do. I will enable your enemies to cut you into pieces, you officials of Judah and you officials of Jerusalem, and you officials in the palace, and you priests and all you common people. I will do that because you have ignored the fact that you had solemnly promised to free your slaves. ²⁰I will enable your enemies to capture you, and they will kill you. And your bodies will be food for vultures and wild animals.

²¹I will enable the army of the king of Babylon to capture King Zedekiah and his officials. Although the king of Babylon and his army have left Jerusalem for a short time, ²²I will summon them back again. This time, they will fight against this city and capture it and burn it down. I will make sure that all the towns in Judah are destroyed, with the result that no one will live there anymore."

Chapter 35

¹Several years earlier, when Jehoiakim son of Josiah was the king of Judah, Yahweh gave me this message: ²"Go to the place where families of the Rekab clan live. Invite them to my temple. When they arrive, take them into one of the inside rooms and offer them some wine."

³So I went to see Jaazaniah and all his brothers and sons who represented the Rekab clan. Jaazaniah was a son of another man named Jeremiah and grandson of Habazziniah. ⁴I took them to the temple, and we went into the room where the sons of Igdaliah's son Hanan, who was a prophet, stayed. That room was next to the room that was used by the men who were in charge of the entrances to the temple. It was above the room that belonged to Maaseiah, who was the temple gatekeeper and the son of Shallum.

⁵I set jugs of wine and some cups in front of them and urged them to drink some, ⁶but they refused. They said, "We do not drink wine, because our ancestor Jonadab son of Rekab, commanded us, saying 'You and your descendants must never drink wine. ⁷And you must not build houses or plant vineyards or other crops. Instead, you must always live in tents. If you obey those commands, you all will live for many years in this land.' ⁸So we have obeyed him in all those matters. We have never drunk wine. Our wives and our sons and our daughters have also never drunk wine. ⁹We have not built houses or planted vineyards or other crops or worked in fields. ¹⁰We have lived in tents. We have obeyed all the commands that Jonadab, our ancestor, gave us. ¹¹But when the army of King Nebuchadnezzar attacked this country, we said, 'We must go to Jerusalem to escape from the armies of Babylonia and Aram.' So, we came to Jerusalem and we are living here."

¹²Then Yahweh gave this message to me: ¹³"This is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: 'Go and tell this to the people in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah: "Why do you not listen to me or learn something about how to obey me? ¹⁴The Rekab clan still do not drink wine, because their ancestor Jonadab told them to not do that. In contrast, I have spoken to you many times, but you ignored me and refused to obey me. ¹⁵Many times I sent prophets to you. They told you, 'Turn away from your wicked behavior, and do things that you should do. Stop worshiping other gods, in order that you will be able to live peacefully in this land that I gave to you and your ancestors.' But you would not pay attention to what I said or obey me. ¹⁶The descendants of Jonadab have obeyed their ancestor, but you have refused to pay attention to what I told you.

¹⁷Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: 'You have refused to listen to me and you did not answer when I called you. Therefore, I will cause the people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to experience all the disasters that I said that I would cause to happen.'""

¹⁸Then Jeremiah turned to the Rekab clan and said, "This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: 'You have obeyed what your ancestor Jonadab told you. You have obeyed all his instructions. ¹⁹Therefore, this is what Yahweh says: "There will always be descendants of Jonadab who will do work for me.'""

Chapter 36

¹When Jehoiakim son of Josiah had been the king of Judah for almost four years, Yahweh gave this message to me:

²"Get a scroll, and write on it the messages that I have given to you regarding Israel, Judah, and the other nations. Write all of the messages, starting from the time that I gave you the first message, when Josiah was the king, up until now. ³When the people of Judah hear again about all the disasters that I plan to cause them to experience, perhaps each one of them will repent. If they do that, I will be able to forgive them for the wrong things that they have done."

⁴So Jeremiah summoned Baruch son of Neraiah. Then, as Jeremiah dictated to him all the messages that Yahweh had spoken to him, he wrote them on a scroll. ⁵Then Jeremiah said to him, "I am not allowed to leave here and go to the temple. ⁶So, you go to the temple on the next day when the people are fasting, and read to them the messages from Yahweh that you wrote while I dictated them to you. Read them aloud to all the people who are there, including the people of Judah who come there from their towns. ⁷Perhaps they will turn from their evil behavior and request Yahweh to act mercifully toward them. They must do that, because Yahweh is very angry with them and has threatened to punish them severely."

⁸Baruch did what Jeremiah told him to do. He went to the temple and read to the people all those messages from Yahweh. ⁹He did it on the ninth month, on a day when their leaders had proclaimed that all the people in Jerusalem, and the people who had come there from other towns in Judah, should fast to please Yahweh. This happened when Jehoiakim had been king for almost five years. ¹⁰Baruch read to all the people the messages that he had written on the scroll. He read them while he was in the temple, in the room where Gemariah stayed. He was the son of Shaphan, who had previously been the king's secretary. That room was close to the upper courtyard of the temple, near the entrance to the temple that is called the New Gate.

¹¹When Micaiah son of Gemariah, and grandson of Shaphan, heard these messages from Yahweh, ¹²he went down to the secretary's room in the palace, where all the king's officials were meeting. Elishama the king's secretary was there. Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the other officials of the king were also there. ¹³When Micaiah told them about the messages that Baruch had been reading to the people, ¹⁴the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, and grandson of Shelemiah and great-grandson of Cushi, to tell Baruch to come and read the messages to them, also. So Baruch took the scroll and went to them.

¹⁵They said to him, "Please sit down and read it to us." So Baruch did what they requested.

¹⁶After they had heard all the messages, they were afraid. They looked at each other and then they said, "We must tell these messages to the king!" ¹⁷Then they asked Baruch, "How did you get this scroll? Did Jeremiah dictate to you all the messages on this scroll?"

¹⁸Baruch replied, "Yes, Jeremiah dictated them to me, and I wrote them with ink on this scroll."

¹⁹Then the officials told Baruch, "You and Jeremiah must both hide. Do not tell anyone where you are!"

²⁰They put the scroll in the room of Elishama, the king's secretary. Then they went to the king, who was in the courtyard, and reported to him everything that Baruch had read to them.

²¹Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought it from Elishama's room and read it to the king, while all the king's officials were standing there. ²²It was in the cold season, and the king was in a part of the palace where he stayed when it was cold. He was sitting in front of a fire to keep warm. ²³Each time Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king cut off that section of the scroll with a knife and threw it into the fire. He did that, section by section, until the entire scroll was burned up. ²⁴Neither the king nor his officials showed that they were afraid that God would punish them. They did not tear their clothes to show that they were sorry for what they had done. ²⁵Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah pleaded with the king not to burn the scroll, but he did not pay any attention. ²⁶Then the king commanded his son Jerahmeel, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch and me. But they were unable to do that because Yahweh had hidden us.

²⁷After the king had burned the scroll on which were written the messages that I had dictated to Baruch, Yahweh said this to me: ²⁸"Get another scroll, and tell Baruch to write everything again, the same messages that he had written on the scroll that King Jehoiakim burned. ²⁹Then go to the king and say to him, 'Yahweh says this: You burned the scroll because you did not like what was written on it, that the king of Babylon would surely come with his army and destroy this land and get rid of all the people and the animals. ³⁰Now this is what I, Yahweh, say about you, Jehoiakim: None of your descendants will rule this kingdom. Your corpse will be thrown out on the ground and not buried; it will be under the hot sun during the days and struck by frost during the nights. ³¹I will punish you and your family and your officials for their sins. And I will cause the people of Jerusalem and the people of the other towns in Judah to experience all the disasters that I promised, because you all would not pay attention to what I said!'"

³²So Jeremiah took another scroll, and again he dictated the messages to Baruch. He wrote everything that had been written on the other scroll, the one that King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. But this time, Jeremiah added more messages.

Chapter 37

¹After Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became king for only three months, after which King Josiah's son Zedekiah became the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, appointed him to be the new king. ²But King Zedekiah and his palace officials and the other people in the land paid no attention to the messages that Yahweh gave me.

³However, one day King Zedekiah sent Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, to me. They requested me to pray to Yahweh our God for our nation.

⁴At that time Jeremiah had not yet been put in prison, so he could go and come wherever and whenever he wanted to, without being hindered.

⁵At that time, the army of Hophra, the king of Egypt, came to the southern border of Judah. When the army of Babylonia heard about that, they stopped surrounding Jerusalem and left there to fight against the army from Egypt.

⁶Then Yahweh gave this message to me: ⁷"I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, say this: The king of Judah has sent messengers to you to ask me what is going to happen. Tell the king that even though the army of the king of Egypt came to help him, they are about to return to Egypt. ⁸Then the army of Babylonia will return here, capture this city, and burn everything in it.

⁹So, this is what Jeremiah said to you Israelites: 'You should not deceive yourselves, thinking that the army from Babylonia has gone and will not return. That is not true. ¹⁰And even if your soldiers could destroy almost all of the soldiers from Babylonia who are attacking you, and allow only those who were wounded to remain alive in their tents, those men would come out of their tents and completely burn this city.'

¹¹When the army from Babylonia left Jerusalem because the army from Egypt was approaching, ¹²Jeremiah started to leave the city. He intended to go to the area where the descendants of Benjamin live, in order to take possession of my share of the property from my family. ¹³But as he was walking out the Benjamin Gate, the head guard seized Jeremiah and said, "You are deserting us and going to the soldiers from Babylonia!" The man who seized him was Irijah son of Shelemiah, and grandson of Hananiah.

¹⁴But Jeremiah protested and said, "That is not true! I was not intending to do that!" But Irijah would not pay attention to what Jeremiah said. He took Jeremiah to the king's officials. ¹⁵They were very angry with him. They commanded the guards to beat Jeremiah and then to put him in the house where Jonathan the king's secretary stayed. They had changed Jonathan's house to make it become a prison.

¹⁶They put Jeremiah in a dungeon in that prison, and he remained there for several days. ¹⁷Then King Zedekiah secretly sent a servant to him, who took Jeremiah to the palace. There the king asked him, "Do you have any messages from Yahweh?" Jeremiah replied, "Yes, the message is that you will be put into the hands of the king of Babylon."

¹⁸Then Jeremiah asked the king, "What crime have I committed against you or against your officials or against the Israelite people, with the result that you have commanded that I be put in a prison? ¹⁹Your prophets predicted that the army of the king of Babylon would not attack you or this land. Why were their messages not fulfilled? ²⁰Your majesty, I plead with you to listen to me. Do not send me back to the dungeon in the house of Jonathan your secretary, because if you do that, I will die there."

²¹So King Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah not be sent back to the prison cell. Instead, he was allowed to be watched by the guards in the courtyard of the palace. The king also commanded that they should bring him a loaf of fresh bread every day, until there was no bread left in the city. So they put Jeremiah in that courtyard and he remained there.

Chapter 38

¹Four officials, Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah, heard what Jeremiah had been telling all the people. ²He had been telling them that Yahweh was saying, "Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die. They will be killed by their enemies' swords or from famines or from diseases. But those who surrender to the Babylonian army will remain alive. They will escape; they will not be killed. ³Yahweh also says that the army of the king of Babylon will certainly capture this city."

⁴So those officials went to the king and said, "This man Jeremiah should be executed! Because of what he is saying, he is discouraging our soldiers who remain in the city. He is also discouraging the people. He is not saying things that will help us; he is saying things that will defeat us."

⁵King Zedekiah said, "All right, do to him what you want to; I do not have the power to stop you."

⁶So those officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into a cistern in the courtyard. The cistern belonged to Malkijah, who was a son of the king. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a lot of mud, so he sank down deep into the mud.

⁷But Ebed-Melek, a palace official from Ethiopia, heard someone say that Jeremiah was in the well. At that time the king was deciding people's cases at the Benjamin Gate. ⁸Ebed-Melek went out of the palace and said to the king, ⁹"Your majesty, those men have done a very evil thing. They have put the prophet Jeremiah in a well. Almost all the food in the city is gone, so no one will be able to bring him any food, and as a result he will die from hunger!"

¹⁰So the king told Ebed-Melek, "Take thirty of my men with you, and pull Jeremiah out of the well, in order that he does not die!"

¹¹So Ebed-Melek took charge of those thirty men; they went into a room in the palace below the room where people had stored things. There they found some old rags and discarded clothing. They took those things and went to the well. They fastened them to a rope and lowered the rope to me. ¹²Then Ebed-Melek called down to me, "Put these rags underneath your armpits, to protect you from being injured by the ropes!" So Jeremiah did that. ¹³Then they pulled him out of the well. So he stayed in the courtyard where the palace guards were.

¹⁴One day King Zedekiah summoned Jeremiah, and he was brought to the king, who was waiting for him at the entrance of the temple. He said to Jeremiah, "I want to ask you something. I want you to answer me truthfully, and to not conceal anything."

¹⁵Jeremiah replied, "If I tell you the truth, you will command that I be executed. And if I give you good advice, you will not pay attention to what I say."

¹⁶But King Zedekiah secretly promised him, "Tell me the truth! And as surely as Yahweh lives, I will not cause you to be executed, and I will not put you into the hands of those who are wanting to kill you."

¹⁷So then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: 'If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, you and your family will be spared, and this city will not be burned. ¹⁸But if you refuse to surrender to them, you will not escape. And the army from Babylonia will capture this city and completely burn it.'"

¹⁹The king replied, "But I am afraid to surrender to the soldiers from Babylon, because their officers may put me into the hands of the people of Judah who have already joined the soldiers from Babylonia, and those people from Judah will mistreat me."

²⁰Jeremiah replied, "If you obey Yahweh by doing what I tell you to do, they will not put you into the hands of our people. Things will go well for you, and you will remain alive. ²¹But if you refuse to surrender, I will tell you what Yahweh has revealed to me. ²²All the women who remain in your palace will be brought out and given to the officers of the king of Babylon. Then those women will say to you:

'You had friends whom you thought you could trust,

but they have deceived you and caused you to make a wrong decision.

Now it is as though you are stuck in mud,

and your friends have abandoned you.'

²³All of your wives and children in the city will be led out to the soldiers from Babylonia, and you also will not escape. The soldiers of the king of Babylon will seize you, and they will burn down this city."

²⁴Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Do not tell anyone what you told me; if you tell anyone, the king's officials may kill you. ²⁵If my officials find out that I talked to you, perhaps they will come to you and say, 'Tell us what you and the king were talking about. If you do not tell us, we will kill you.' ²⁶If that happens, just tell them that you pleaded with me not to send you back to the dungeon in Jonathan's house, because you were afraid that you would die if you were put there again."

²⁷And that is what happened. The king's officials came to Jeremiah and asked why the king had summoned him. But he told them what the king told him to tell them. So they did not ask Jeremiah any more questions, because no one had heard what the king and Jeremiah had said to each other.

²⁸So Jeremiah remained being guarded in the courtyard of the palace, until the day that the army of Babylonia captured Jerusalem.

Chapter 39

¹After King Zedekiah had been ruling Judah for almost nine years, King Nebuchadnezzar came in the tenth month of the year with his army, and they surrounded Jerusalem. ²One and a half years later, after Zedekiah had been ruling for almost eleven years, in the eleventh year and fourth month, soldiers from Babylonia broke through the city wall. Then they rushed in and captured the city. ³Then all the officers of the king of Babylon came in and sat down at the Middle Gate to decide what they would do to the city. They included Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar Nebo, Sarsekim who was one of the chief administrative officers, Nergal-Sharezer, the king's advisor, and many other officials.

⁴When King Zedekiah and all his soldiers realized that the army of Babylonia had broken into the city, they fled. They waited until it was dark. Then they went out of the city through the king's garden, through the gate that was between the two walls. Then they started running toward the plain along the Jordan.

⁵But the soldiers from Babylonia pursued the king, and they caught him on the plains near Jericho. They took him to the king of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the Hamath. There Nebuchadnezzar told his soldiers what they should do to punish Zedekiah. ⁶They forced Zedekiah to watch while they killed his sons and all the officials from Judah. ⁷Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes. They fastened him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon.

⁸Meanwhile, the Babylonian army burned the palace and all the other buildings in Jerusalem. And they tore down the city walls. ⁹Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the king's bodyguards, forced to go to Babylon most of the other people who remained in the city and the Jews who had joined the soldiers of Babylonia. ¹⁰But he allowed some of the very poor people to remain in Judah, and he gave them vineyards and fields to take care of.

¹¹King Nebuchadnezzar had previously told the captain of the guard, Nebuzaradan to find Jeremiah. He said, ¹²"Make sure that no one harms him. Take care of him, and do for him whatever he requests you to do." ¹³So he and Nebushazban, who was one of their chief officers, and Nergal-Sharezer the king's advisor, and other officers of the king of Babylon ¹⁴sent some men to bring Jeremiah out of the courtyard outside of the palace. They took him to Gedaliah who was the son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. Then Gedaliah took Jeremiah to his home, and he stayed in Judah among his own people who had been allowed to remain there.

¹⁵But while Jeremiah was still being guarded in the palace courtyard, Yahweh gave him this message: ¹⁶"Say this to Ebed-Melek, the official from Ethiopia: 'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: I will do to this city everything that I said that I would do. Everything I told you would be done, and you will see it with your own eyes. ¹⁷But I promise to rescue you from the people you are afraid of. This is what I, Yahweh, have promised to you! ¹⁸You trusted me, so I will save you. You will not be killed by our enemies' swords. You will live. That will surely happen, because I, Yahweh, have said it.'"

Chapter 40

¹The soldiers from Babylonia captured Jeremiah and many other people from Jerusalem and other places in Judah. They planned to take them to Babylon. So they fastened chains around their wrists and took them to Ramah, a town north of Jerusalem. While they were there, Jeremiah was released. This is how it happened: ²Nebuzaradan, the captain of the king's guards, found that Jeremiah was there. He summoned Jeremiah and said to him, "Yahweh

your God said that he would cause this land to experience a disaster. ³And now he has caused it to happen. He has done just what he said that he would do, because you people sinned against Yahweh and refused to obey him.

⁴But today I am going to take the chains off your wrists and release you. If you want to come with me to Babylon, that will be fine. I will take care of you. But if you do not want to come with me, do not come. Stay here. Look, the entire country is available; you can choose whatever part you want to go to. You can go wherever you think it is best." Then he took the chains off Jeremiah's wrists. ⁵He said, "If you decide to stay here, go to Gedaliah. The king of Babylon appointed him to be the governor of Judah. You will be allowed to stay here with the people that he is governing. But you can do whatever you want to."

Then Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah some food and some money, and he allowed him to go.

⁶He returned to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and he stayed in Judah with the people who still remained in the land.

⁷The Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylonia were roaming around in the countryside. Then their leaders heard someone say that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah to be the governor of the very poor people who were still in Judah, who had not been taken to Babylon. ⁸So they went to talk to Gedaliah at Mizpah. Those who went included Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai from Netophath, and Jezaniah from Maacah, and the soldiers who were with them. ⁹Gedaliah solemnly promised that the soldiers from Babylonia would not harm them. He said, "Do not be afraid to do things for them. Stay here in this land and do things for the king of Babylon. If you do that, things will go well for you. ¹⁰As for me, I will stay here at Mizpah to be your representative to the officials from Babylonia who come to talk with us. But you should return to your towns, and eat the things that are produced on your land. Harvest the grapes and the fruit that ripens in the summer and the olives, make wine and olive oil, and store it."

¹¹Then the Jews who had fled to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and other nearby countries heard people say that the king of Babylon had allowed a few people to remain in Judah, and that he had appointed Gedaliah to be their governor.

¹²So they began to return to Judah. They stopped at Mizpah to talk with Gedaliah. Then they went to various places in Judea, and they harvested a great amount of grapes and summer fruit.

¹³Some time later, Johanan and all the other leaders of the Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylonia came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. ¹⁴They said to him, "Do you know that Baalis, the king of the people of Ammon, has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?" But Gedaliah did not believe what they said.

¹⁵Later Johanan talked with Gedaliah privately. He said, "Allow me to go and murder Ishmael secretly. It would not be good to allow him to come and murder you! If you are killed, what will happen to all the Jews who have returned to this area? They will be scattered, and the other people who remain in Judah will all be killed!"

¹⁶But Gedaliah said to Johanan, "No, I will not allow you to do that. I think that you are lying about Ishmael."

Chapter 41

¹Ishmael son of Nethaniah was a member of the king's family. He had been one of King Zedekiah's important officials. In the seventh month of that year, he went to Mizpah with ten other men to talk with Gedaliah. While they were eating together, ²Ishmael and the other ten men jumped up, and with their swords they killed Gedaliah—the man whom the king of Babylon had appointed to be their governor! ³Ishmael and the other men also killed all the Jews and the Babylonians who his soldiers found with Gedaliah at Mizpah.

⁴The next day, before anyone had found out that Gedaliah had been murdered, ⁵eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria came to worship at the temple of Yahweh in Mizpah. They had shaved off their beards and torn their clothes and cut themselves to show that they were mourning. And they had brought grain offerings and incense to burn on the altar. ⁶Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out of the city to meet them, weeping as he went. When he reached them, he said, "Come and see what has happened to Gedaliah!"

⁷But as soon as they had all entered the town, Ishmael and his men killed most of them and threw their corpses into a well. ⁸There were only ten of them whom they spared. They were not killed because they promised to Ishmael that if he allowed them to remain alive, they would bring him lots of wheat and barley and olive oil and honey that they had hidden. ⁹The well where Ishmael's men had thrown the corpses of the men whom they had murdered was the deep well that King Asa's men had dug in order that they would have water in the city if the army of King Baasha of Israel would surround the city. Ishmael's men filled that well with corpses.

¹⁰Then Ishmael and his men captured the king's daughters and some of the other people who had been left in Mizpah by the chief Babylonian guard Nebuzaradan so that Gedaliah would take care of them. Ishmael and his men took those people and started back toward the Ammon area.

¹¹But Johanan son of Kareah and all the other leaders of the Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylonia heard about what Ishmael son of Nethaniah and his men had done. ¹²So they immediately went with all their men to stop them. They caught up with them at the large pool near the city of Gibeon. ¹³When all the people whom Ishmael and his men had captured saw Johanan and the soldiers who were with him, they shouted joyfully. ¹⁴So all those who had been captured in Mizpah escaped, and they started to help Johanan. ¹⁵But Ishmael son of Nethaniah and eight of his men escaped and fled to the Ammon area. ¹⁶Then Johanan son of Kareah and the men who were with him gathered together all the people whom they had rescued at Gibeon. They included soldiers and women and children and some of the king's palace officials. They were all people whom Ishmael and his men had captured after they had killed Gedaliah. ¹⁷They took them all to Geruth Kimham village near Bethlehem. And they all prepared to go to Egypt. ¹⁸They were worried about what the soldiers of Babylonia would do to them when they found out that Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, who had been appointed by the king of Babylonia to be their governor.

Chapter 42

¹Then Johanan son of Kereah and Jezaniah son of Hoshai, and all the other leaders of the Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylonia, and many other people, including those who were important and those who were not important, came to me. ²They said, "Please listen to our request and pray to Yahweh our God for all of us. Although we were previously a huge number of people, you can see that now we are only a small number of people who have survived. ³Pray that Yahweh our God will show us what we should do and where we should go."

⁴I replied, "Okay, I will pray to Yahweh our God, like you have requested, and I will tell you what he says. I will tell you everything."

⁵They replied to me, "We know that Yahweh our God will be a faithful witness against us if we refuse to do everything that he tells us to do. ⁶We are requesting you to ask Yahweh our God what we should do. When he replies, we will obey him, whether we like what he says or not. We will do that because we know that things will go well for us if we obey him."

⁷So I prayed to Yahweh, and ten days later he gave me his reply. ⁸So I summoned Johanan son of Kereah and all the other leaders of the and all the other people, including those who were important and those who were not important. ⁹I said to them, "You told me to tell Yahweh, the God of Israel what you were requesting. This is what he replied: ¹⁰You should stay here in this land. If you do that, I will cause your nation to be strong and not be weak. I will cause you to prosper and not be exiled again. I will stop the disasters that I made you experience. ¹¹But do not be afraid of the king of Babylon anymore, because I will be with you. I will rescue you from his power. ¹²I will be merciful to you by causing him to act kindly toward you. So as a result, he will allow you to stay here in your land.'

¹³But if you refuse to obey Yahweh our God, and if you say 'We will not stay here; ¹⁴instead, we will go to Egypt. There we will not experience any wars, we will not hear trumpets signaling our soldiers to prepare for battles, and we will not be hungry.' ¹⁵Listen now! you people who are left in Judah! Listen to what Yahweh, commander of the

angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says to you: 'If you are determined to go to Egypt, and if you go and live there, ¹⁶you will experience those wars and famines that you are afraid of, and you will all die there. ¹⁷That is what will happen to all you who are determined to go to Egypt and live there. Some of you will be killed by the swords of your enemies, and others of you will die from famines and from diseases. None of you will escape the disasters that I will bring on you.'

¹⁸And Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, also says this: 'Because I was very angry, I severely punished all the people of Jerusalem. I will do the same things to you when you go to Egypt. The result will be that people will curse you. They will be horrified about what has happened to you. They will make fun of you, and you will never see this land again.'

¹⁹You little group of people of Judah who are still alive, listen to me: Yahweh has told you, 'Do not go to Egypt.' So do not forget what I have warned you today. ²⁰You made a life-and-death mistake when you requested me to pray to Yahweh our God and claimed to be willing to obey everything he said. ²¹So today I have told you exactly what he said, but I know that you will not obey Yahweh our God now, just as you have not obeyed him previously. ²²You want to go to Egypt and live there. So now, you can be sure of this: All of you will die there. Some of you will be killed by the swords of your enemies and others will die from famines or from diseases."

Chapter 43

¹So I finished telling to the people that message from Yahweh our God. ²But then Johanan son of Kareah and Azariah son of Hoshaiah and some other insolent men said to me, "You are lying! Yahweh our God has not told us that we should not go to Egypt! ³We think that Baruch son of Neriah has urged you to say this, in order that if we stay here, the soldiers from Babylonia will seize us and kill us or take us to Babylonia."

⁴So Johanan and the other leaders of the Judean soldiers and many of the other people who were there refused to obey Yahweh's command to stay in Judah. ⁵Johanan and all the other leaders gathered together all the people who had returned from the other countries to which they had been scattered. ⁶They included men, women, children, the king's daughters, and all those whom Nebuzaradan had left with Gedaliah, and they also took Baruch and me. ⁷They refused to obey Yahweh, and they took us all to Egypt, as far as the city of Tahpanhes.

⁸While we were at Tachpanches, Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ⁹"While the people of Judah are watching you, take some large rocks and bury them under the brick pavement at the entrance to the king's palace there at Tachpanches. ¹⁰Then say to the people of Judah, 'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "I will summon Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, who does my work, to come with his army to Egypt. I will set up his throne over these stones that I told Jeremiah to bury. And Nebuchadnezzar will set up his tent there to show that he has become the king of Egypt. ¹¹When his army comes, they will attack Egypt. Then those will die who I have determined must die, those who I have determined must be captured will be captured, and those who I have determined must be killed by swords will be killed by swords. ¹²Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers will burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt and take away their idols as souvenirs. His troops will clean Egypt like a shepherd cleans lice from his cloak and leave without having been harmed. ¹³But before they leave, they will have torn down the pillars that are in the temple of their sun god and burned all of the temple of the false Egyptian gods.'"

Chapter 44

¹This is the message that Yahweh gave me concerning the Judeans who were living in northern Egypt—in Migdol, Tachpanches, and Memphis—and in the region of Pathros in southern Egypt: ²"This is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: You saw the disaster that I caused the people in Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah to experience. Those towns are now ruined and deserted. ³That happened because I was extremely angry with them on account of their being very wicked. They burned incense to other gods and

worshiped them. They were gods that you previously did not know about, and your ancestors also did not know about them. ⁴Many times I sent my prophets who served me, to say to them, 'Do not do those abominable things that I hate!' ⁵But my people would not pay any attention to what I said to them. They would not turn away from their wicked behavior, or stop burning incense to worship other gods. ⁶So I poured out the consequences of my great anger on them. My punishment fell on the streets of Jerusalem and on the other towns in Judah like a fire. It caused those towns to be ruined and deserted, and they are still like that.

⁷So now I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, ask you: Why are you causing yourselves to experience these disasters? Do you not realize that because of what you are doing, soon there will be no more men or women or children or infants left among you who have come here to Egypt from Judah? ⁸Why are you provoking me and causing me to be very angry by burning incense to the idols that you have made here in Egypt? If you continue doing this, you will destroy yourselves, and you will cause yourselves to be people whom all the nations on the earth will curse and despise. ⁹Have you forgotten how I punished your ancestors for the wicked things that they did, and how I punished the kings and queens of Judah for what they did, and you and your wives for the sins that you committed in the streets of Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah? ¹⁰Up until this day you have not humbled yourselves or revered me. You have not obeyed the laws and decrees that I gave to you and your ancestors.

¹¹Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: I am determined to cause all of you to experience disasters and to get rid of everyone in Judah. ¹²You people from Judah who have survived were determined to come and live here in Egypt. So I will get rid of all of you here in Egypt. Every one of you will die, including those who are important and those who are not important. Some of you will be killed by your enemies' swords, some will die from famines. You will become people whom others curse, be horrified about, and make fun of. ¹³I will punish you here in Egypt like I punished others in Jerusalem, some of whom were killed by their enemies' swords and some of whom died from famines or diseases. ¹⁴None of you people who came from Judah and now live in Egypt, none of you will be successful in any attempt to escape from Egypt, you will not grow in numbers while you live in Egypt, and you will not be able to return to Judah, even though you desire to return to Judah, you will not be able to go back there to live and make your homes. None of you will be able to return to Judah, except only a very small number of you who will be able able to escape from Egypt and to return Judah and live there."

¹⁵Then a large group of the people who had started to live in northern Egypt and southern Egypt, including all the men who knew that their wives had been burning incense to other gods, and all the women who were standing there, said this to me: ¹⁶"You are saying that Yahweh gave messages to you, but we will not pay any attention to your messages! ¹⁷We will certainly do everything that we said that we would do. We will burn incense to worship our goddess Asherah, the Queen of Heaven, and we will pour out offerings of wine to her, just like we and our ancestors and our kings and their officials have always done in the streets of Jerusalem and in the other towns in Judah. At that time, we had plenty of food, and we were prosperous and we did not have any troubles. ¹⁸But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and giving her offerings of wine, we have had many troubles, and some of our people have been killed by our enemies or died from hunger."

¹⁹And the women said, "Furthermore, we burned incense and poured out wine offerings to the Queen of Heaven, and we also made small cakes that resembled her idol, to offer to her, and we poured drinks to honor her. But our husbands certainly knew about and approved of what we were doing!"

²⁰Then I said to all the men and women who had answered me, ²¹"Do not think that Yahweh did not know that you and your ancestors and your kings and their officials and all the other people in Judah were burning incense to worship idols in the streets of Jerusalem and in the other towns in Judah! He knew about it! ²²It was because Yahweh could no longer endure your wicked actions and the detestable things that you were doing that he caused your land to be a place whose name people say when they curse someone, a land that is ruined and which has no one living in it. And your land is still like that. ²³It is because you burned incense to worship idols and committed other sins against Yahweh that you experienced all those disasters. It is because you have not obeyed him or obeyed his laws and decrees and commandments."

²⁴Then Jeremiah said to all of them, including the women, "All you people of Judah who are here in Egypt, listen to this message from Yahweh. ²⁵This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says to you men: 'You and your wives have said that you would continue to do what you promised, to burn incense and pour out wine to the goddess whom you call the Queen of Heaven. And you have proved by your actions that you intend to continue to do that. So go ahead and continue doing what you have promised to do for her.'

²⁶But now, all you people from Judah who are now living here in Egypt, listen to this message from Yahweh. He says, 'I have solemnly declared, using my great name, that soon none of you people from Judah who are here in Egypt will ever again use my name. There will be none of you who, when you solemnly promise to do something, will ever again say, "I will do it as surely as Yahweh lives." ²⁷Because I will be watching over you, not to cause good things to happen to you but to cause things to happen that will harm you. Almost everyone from Judah who is now here in Egypt will be killed by their enemies' swords or die from famine until almost all of you have come to an end. ²⁸Only a very few of you will not die by the sword and will return to Judah. When that happens, all those who came to Egypt will find out whose words were true, theirs or mine.'

²⁹And Yahweh also says, 'I will do something that will prove to you that everything that I have said will happen, and that I will punish you here in this place. ³⁰I will cause Hophra, the king of Egypt, to be captured by his enemies who want to kill him, just like I caused King Zedekiah of Judah to be captured by the soldiers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.'"

Chapter 45

¹After Jehoiakim son of King Josiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years, Baruch son of Neriah wrote down all the messages that the prophet Jeremiah had dictated. Jeremiah gave a message and he said, ²"Baruch, Yahweh, the God of Israel, has a message for you. ³You have said, 'Terrible things are happening to me! I have endured much pain already. And now Yahweh is causing me to be very sad, in addition to my having pain. I am exhausted from my groaning, and I am unable to rest!'

⁴But Baruch, this is what Yahweh says: 'I will destroy this nation that I established. This nation is like a tree that I planted and that I will now pull up with its roots. I will do this everywhere in the world. ⁵So, should you desire that people do things to honor you in a special way? Do not desire that. It is true that I will cause all these people to experience a great disaster, but wherever you go, I will protect you, and you will not be killed.'"

Chapter 46

¹These are messages that Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah about other nations.

²After Jehoiakim son of King Josiah, had been ruling Judah for almost four years, this message about Egypt was given to me by Yahweh. It was when the army of King Necho of Egypt was defeated by the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon at Carchemish by the Euphrates River.

This is what Yahweh said: "The officers of the army of Egypt are saying to their troops,

³'Prepare your small and large shields

and march out to fight the battle!

⁴Put harnesses on your horses,

and get on their backs.

Get into your positions for the battle;

put on your helmets.
Sharpen your spears,
and put on your armor!

⁵But what do I see?

I see that the soldiers of Egypt will be terrified and will be fleeing.
Even the bravest of their soldiers will be running away,
without even looking backward!

I, Yahweh, say that their soldiers will be terrified on all sides!

⁶Even the fastest runners will try to run away,
but even the greatest of their warriors will not escape.

In the north, by the Euphrates River,
they will stumble and fall.

⁷What group is this that will be covering the land
like the water of the Nile River covers the land when it floods and its waves surge?

⁸The kingdom of Egypt rises and falls
like the Nile that surging with a flood of water,
and Egypt will boast that they will cover the earth
and will destroy cities and the people who live in them.

⁹You riders of horses, charge into the battle!
You drivers of chariots, drive furiously like a crazy person!
All you warriors from Ethiopia and Libya
who carry your shields,
you warriors from Lydia
who shoot arrows,
you come!

¹⁰But, you need to know that this is the day when I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will get revenge on my enemies.

With my sword I will kill my enemies until I am satisfied;
my sword will be like a monster that drinks the blood of the animals it kills until it is no longer thirsty.
The enemy soldiers who will be killed in the north beside the Euphrates River
will be like a sacrifice to me, the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

¹¹You innocent people of Egypt,

go up to the region of Gilead to obtain medicine;
but it will be useless to take all those medicines;
you will not be healed.

¹²People in the other nations hear how you were humiliated.

People all over the earth hear you wailing.

Your mighty warriors stumble over each other
and they all fall down together.”

¹³Then Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah this message about King Nebuchadnezzar when he planned to attack Egypt with his army:

¹⁴“Shout this message throughout Egypt!

Proclaim it in the cities of Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpenes!

‘Get into your positions for the battle;

Prepare to defend yourselves,

because everyone around you will be killed.’

¹⁵Why do those whose strength you trust fall down?

They cannot stand up,

because Yahweh will knock them down.

¹⁶The soldiers from other countries will stumble and fall over each other,

and then they will say to each other,

“Let us get up and go back to our own people, to our own land.

Let us get away from the swords of our enemies!”

¹⁷There in Egypt they will say,

“The king of Egypt talks loudly,

but when our army had an opportunity to defeat our enemies, they failed.”

¹⁸I, the King, who is called Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,
say this:

‘As surely as I live, an army is coming to fight against the army of Egypt.

They will be extremely powerful,

as though they were as tall as Tabor Hill,

or as high as Mount Carmel, close to the Mediterranean Sea.

¹⁹All you people who live in Egypt,

pack your possessions and prepare to be exiled.

Memphis will be destroyed;
it will become a ruin, and no people will be living there.

²⁰Egypt is like a beautiful young cow,
but a powerful king from the northeast is surely coming to attack it
like a horsefly bites a cow.

²¹The mercenaries that Egypt has hired are like fat calves because of the Egyptians' money;
but they also will turn around and run away;
they will not stand there and fight,
because it will be a day when there will be a great disaster for Egypt,
a day when their people will be greatly punished.

²²The soldiers of Egypt will run away,
as silently as a snake slithers away.
The army of the enemy will advance;
they will march along carrying their axes
like men who cut down trees.

²³I, Yahweh, say that they will kill the soldiers of Egypt
as though they were cutting down a forest of trees,
because the enemy soldiers will be as numerous as a swarm of locusts.

²⁴The people of Egypt will be humiliated;
they will be conquered by people from the northeast.'

²⁵I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say, 'I will punish Amon, the god whom the people of the city of Thebes worship, and all the other gods in Egypt. I will punish the king of Egypt and all those who trust in him. ²⁶I will cause them to be captured by those who want to kill them—Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and his army officers. But many years later, people will live in Egypt again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.'

²⁷But you people of Israel who serve me,
do not be at all dismayed now,
because some day I will bring you back from distant places;
I will bring your descendants from the land to which they were exiled.
Then you Israelite people will again live peacefully and safely,
and there will not be any nation to cause you to be terrified.

²⁸I, Yahweh, say to you people of Israel who serve me,
'Do not be afraid,

because I will be with you.

I will completely destroy the nations among whom I have scattered you,

but I will not completely get rid of you.

I will punish you, but I will punish you only as severely as you deserve:

it would be wrong if I did not punish you at all.”

Chapter 47

¹Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah a message about the people of Philistia. The message was given to him before the city of Gaza in Philistia was captured by the army of Egypt.

²This is what Yahweh said:

“An army will be coming from the northeast

that will cover the land like a flood.

They will destroy the land and everything in it;

they will destroy people and cities.

People will scream out for help;

and everyone in the land will wail in mourning.

³They will hear the sound of the hooves of the enemy horses,

and they will hear the rumble of the wheels of their enemies' chariots.

Men will run away;

they will not stop to help their own children but

will be completely weak and helpless.

⁴It will be the time for all the people of Philistia to be destroyed,

and the time to stop the remaining soldiers from being able to help the people living in the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

I, Yahweh, will destroy the people of Philistia,

those whose ancestors long ago came from Island of Crete.

⁵The people of Gaza will be humiliated;

they will shave off all the hair on their heads to indicate that they are ashamed.

The people of the city of Ashkelon will all be silent because they will be mourning.

All you people who live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea who are still alive,

how long will you gash yourselves because you are mourning?”

⁶The people of Philistia say, “Yahweh, when will you tell our enemies to stop killing us with their swords?

Tell them to put them back into their sheaths and allow them to stay there!”

⁷But it would not be right for their swords to stay there,
because Yahweh has commanded their enemies to do something more;
Yahweh intends to tell them to attack all the people living in Ashkelon and in other cities along the coast.

Chapter 48

¹This is a message about Moab. Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says,
“Terrible things will happen to the city of Nebo;
it will soon be ruined.

the city of Kiriathaim will be put to shame. It is taken!

The defended fortress will be ruined, and its people will become ashamed.

²No one will boast about Moab again;
the enemies of Moab will plan to destroy the capital city, Heshbon.
They will say, ‘Come, let us cause Moab to no longer be a nation.’
You also, You Madmen! you also will be silenced;
enemy armies will pursue you to kill you.

³Listen to the people of Horonaim screaming;
they will be wailing because their town was completely destroyed.

⁴All of Moab will be ruined;
even the little children will cry loudly.

⁵They will cry bitterly
as they climb up Luhith hill.
Others will wail on the road down to Horonaim.
They were so very sad because their town was completely destroyed.

⁶Someone will say to them, ‘Flee!
Hide in the desert!’

⁷But you trusted that because you were rich and powerful, you would be safe;
so you will be captured.
Your god Chemosh and all his priests and officials
will be taken away to distant lands.

⁸All the towns in Moab will be destroyed;
none of them will escape.

Towns in the valleys and on the plateau will all be destroyed,
because Yahweh has said that is what will happen.

⁹Someone should help all the people in Moab to run away,
so that their land will be empty,
so that no one will live in it any longer.”

¹⁰May Yahweh punish anyone who will not eagerly do what he desires;
may he curse anyone who refrains from using his sword to kill the people in Moab.

¹¹The people of Moab have always felt secure;
they have never been exiled.

They are like wine that has been left undisturbed in a container for many days to give it good flavor,
so now it smells good,
and it tastes good.

¹²But Yahweh says that there will be a time when he will send enemies to attack them;
they will get rid of the people of Moab like people pour out wine on the ground
and then smash the wine jar.

¹³Then the people of Moab will be ashamed of their god Chemosh that they had trusted in, because it did not help them,
like the Israelite people were ashamed because their gold statue of a calf was smashed at Bethel.

¹⁴The soldiers of Moab previously said, “We are warriors;
we have fought bravely in battles!”

¹⁵But now our king, who is called Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says that the country of Moab and all the towns in it will be destroyed.

Their fine young men will all be slaughtered.

¹⁶Moab will very soon be destroyed.

They will soon experience disaster.

¹⁷You people who live in nations near Moab,
who know that it is very famous,
should mourn for Moab,
and say, “Its glorious power is completely ended.”

¹⁸You people of the city of Dibon, stop being proud because of being honored,
and sit in the dust where you will thirst for water,
because those who will destroy other places in Moab will attack your city

and destroy your fortifications.

¹⁹You people of the city of Aroer,

stand along the road and watch.

Shout to the men and women who will be fleeing from Moab,

“What has happened there?”

²⁰They will reply,

“Moab is ruined and we are disgraced!”

So weep and wail.

Proclaim to Amon that Moab has been destroyed.

²¹Yahweh is punishing the towns of Moab that are on the plateau:

Holon and Jahaz and Mephaath,

²²Dibon and Nebo and Beth Diblathaim,

²³Kiriathaim and Beth Gamul and Beth Meon,

²⁴Kerioth and Bozrah.

He is punishing cities that are near each other and towns that are far away from each other.

²⁵Yahweh says, “The power of Moab will be finished;

it is as though it will have a broken arm.

²⁶You people of Moab thought you were powerful enough to rebel against me, Yahweh;

so now I will cause you all to stagger like drunken people.

You people of Moab will wallow in your own vomit

and be ridiculed.

²⁷Did you not ridicule the people of Israel?

Did you think they were nothing but thieves,

so that you shook your head at them with scorn,

and despised them every time you spoke about them?

²⁸You people who live in Moab,

you should abandon your towns and go and live in caves.

Be like pigeons that make their nests in the entrances of caves.”

²⁹We have all heard that the people of Moab are very proud;

they are extremely proud and conceited.

³⁰But Yahweh says, “I know about that,

but it is useless for them to boast
because it will accomplish nothing.

³¹So now I will wail for Moab;

I will cry about all its people.

I will moan for the men of the city of Kir Hareseth, the old capital of Moab.

³²You people of the city of Sibmah, you have many vineyards, and I will be sad when they are destroyed.

It is as though the branches of your vines extend across the Dead Sea to the city of Jazer, but the enemies of Moab will take your grapes and wine from you!

³³But no one will be joyful or happy in Moab now;

your fruit and grapes that ripen in the summer will soon be destroyed.

There will be no grape juice coming from the winepresses,

so there will be no wine.

People will not shout joyfully

as they tread on the grapes;

people will shout,

but they will not be shouting joyfully.

³⁴Instead, the sound of their wailing will rise from the city of Heshbon to the town of Elealeh and the village of Jahaz,

from the city of Zoar as far as the town of Horonaim Eglath Shelishiyah.

Even the water in the stream of Nimrim will be dried up.

³⁵I, Yahweh, say that I will get rid of the people who offer sacrifices on the hilltops,

those who burn incense to their gods.

³⁶I moan for the people of Moab and Kir Hareseth

like someone playing a funeral song on a flute,

because all their wealth will disappear.

³⁷The men will shave their heads and their beards to show that they are mourning.

They all will slash their hands and wear rough cloth around their waists.

³⁸In every home and in the town plazas in Moab there will be people who are mourning,

because I will have destroyed Moab

like someone smashes an old jar that no one wants anymore.

³⁹Moab will be completely shattered with terror!

And you will hear the people wailing loudly!

They will be disgraced.

Moab will become a nation that people ridicule.

The people in nearby countries will be horrified about what has happened there.

⁴⁰This is what I, Yahweh, say:

'Look! Their enemies will be swooping down over Moab

like an eagle swoops down to seize an animal.

⁴¹Its cities will be captured,

its fortresses will be seized.

Even their warriors will be afraid,

like a woman who is about to give birth.

⁴²Moab boasted against me, Yahweh,

so it will be destroyed.

⁴³I, Yahweh, say that you people of Moab will be terrified, and fall into pits and traps.

⁴⁴Those who are terrified and try to run away will fall into deep pits.

Whoever climbs out of a pit will be caught in a trap,

because I will punish them at the time that I have appointed.'

⁴⁵The people will flee as far as the city of Heshbon,

but they will not be able to go any further,

because a fire will burn in Heshbon,

which is the city where King Sihon lived long ago,

and it will burn up all the people in Moab

who noisily boasted very much.

⁴⁶You people of Moab, terrible things will happen to you!

You people who worship your god Chemosh, you will be destroyed.

Your sons and your daughters will be captured and taken away to other countries.

⁴⁷But some day, I will enable the people of Moab to return to their land again.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

That is the end of what Jeremiah prophesied about Moab.

Chapter 49

¹This message is about the people who descended from Ammon. This is what Yahweh says:

"There are plenty of Israelite people left
to occupy the land of the tribe of Gad.

So, why are the people who worship the god Molech living in those towns?

²There will be a time when I will sound the battle cry
for their enemies to attack their capital city, Rabbah.

Then it will become a heap of ruins,
and all the nearby towns will be burned.

Then the people of Israel will again possess the land
that the people of Ammon took away from them.

³You people of the city of Heshbon, wail,
because the city of Ai will be destroyed.

You women in the city of Rabbah, weep;
put on rough clothing to show you are mourning;
run back and forth in confusion inside the city walls,
because your god Molech, along with its priests and officials, will be taken away in exile.

⁴Why do you brag about your valleys,
your valleys that are so fruitful, you faithless daughter?
You think that your wealth will bring you protection against your enemies
and so you dare to ask, "Who is there who can come against me?"

⁵But listen to this: I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,
will cause you to become terrified.
You will all be forced to flee to other countries from the enemies all around you,
and no one will be able to bring you together again.

⁶But some day I will enable the Ammonite people to return to their land.
That will surely happen, because I, Yahweh, have said it."

⁷This message is about the people of Edom. This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:
"It seems that there are no longer any wise people in Teman district in Edom!
There are no people left who can give others good advice.

The people who were wise have disappeared.

⁸You people of the city of Dedan, in the south of Edom,
turn and flee and hide in deep caves,

because I am causing disaster to happen to all the people of Edom,
I will punish you!

⁹Those who harvest grapes
always leave some on the vines.
When thieves come at night,
they surely steal only as much as they want.

¹⁰But I will cause everything in Edom to be destroyed, and there will be nothing left,
and there will be no place for people to hide.
Many of the children, their relatives and their neighbors, will die,
and Edom will not exist anymore.

¹¹Leave behind the orphans because I will take care of them,
and the widows also will be able to depend on me to help them."

¹²And this is also what Yahweh says: "If those who do not deserve to suffer must suffer, you people of Edom must suffer much more! You will not escape being punished. ¹³I, Yahweh, have solemnly promised, using my own name, that your chief city Bozrah will become a place that people will be horrified about. It will be a heap of ruins. People will make fun of it and use its name when they curse people. All the nearby towns and villages will be ruined forever."

¹⁴I heard this message from Yahweh:
"I have sent an ambassador to many nations,
to tell them to gather together to attack Edom.
They must prepare for battle!"

¹⁵And Yahweh says to the people of Edom,
"I will cause your nation to become very unimportant among the other nations.
They will all despise your country.

¹⁶You have caused people of other nations to be terrified,
and you have been very proud,
but you have deceived yourselves.
You live in caves in the rock cliffs;
you think that you are safe there because you live high up there.
But even if you make your homes as high up as the eagles' nests,
I will cause you to come crashing down.

¹⁷Edom will become a place about which people are horrified;
people who pass by will be horrified and will gasp

when they see the destruction.

¹⁸Edom will be destroyed as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby towns were destroyed long ago.
As a result, no one—not a single person—will live there anymore.

¹⁹I will come to Edom suddenly as a lion comes out of the jungle
and leaps on sheep that are eating in good pastures.
I will quickly chase the people of Edom from their land.
And then I will appoint for them a leader whom I will choose;
I can do that because there is no one like me who can object to what I do.
No ruler can oppose me.

²⁰Listen to what I have planned to do to the people of Teman and the rest of Edom:
even the little children will be dragged away,
and I will completely get rid of the people who live there.

²¹When Edom is destroyed, the noise will be extremely great,
with the result that the earth will shake,
and the wailing of the people will be heard as far away as the Sea of Reeds.

²²Look! The enemy troops will swoop down over Bozrah
like an eagle spreads its wings when it swoops down to seize an animal.
On that day, even the strongest warriors of Edom will be afraid
like a woman who is about to give birth.”

²³This message is about Damascus. This is what Yahweh says:
“The people in the nearby cities of Hamath and Arpad will be ashamed,
because they have heard bad news about Damascus.
They are very anxious and restless,
like a sea in a big storm.

²⁴The people of Damascus have become very weak,
and they all have panicked and run away in terror.
The people are anguished and in pain
like a woman experiences who is about to give birth.

²⁵But even now the people of that famous city have not yet abandoned it. That was the city that gave me joy.

²⁶Its young men will fall in the streets.
Its soldiers will all be killed in one day.

²⁷And I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will start a fire to burn the walls that surround Damascus, and the palaces of King Ben Hadad will be burned down.”

²⁸This is a message about the Kedar people and the kingdom of Hazor that Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon is attacking. This is what Yahweh said:

“I will cause an army to advance to attack Kedar
and destroy those people who live east of Judah.

²⁹Enemies will capture their tents and their flocks of sheep.

They will take away the curtains of their tents, their camels, and all of their other possessions.

Everywhere men will shout,

‘We are terrified because terrible things are happening all around us!’

³⁰So I, Yahweh, say, ‘Run away quickly!

You people who live in Hazor, go and hide in deep caves,
because King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon wants to attack you with his army;
he is planning to destroy you!’

³¹But I say to Nebuchadnezzar,

‘Go up and attack that nation whose people feel secure;
they do not have allies who will help them and do not have walls with gates that have bars in them.

³²Your troops will seize their camels and other livestock.

I will scatter in every direction those people who will be in great mourning.

I will bring disasters to them from every direction.

³³Hazor will become a place where jackals live,

and it will be deserted forever.

No one will live there again;

no people will settle there. ”

³⁴The prophet Jeremiah received this message from Yahweh when King Zedekiah was starting to rule Judah.

³⁵This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

“The men of Elam are famous archers;
that is how they have made their country very powerful.
But I will get rid of them.

³⁶I will bring their enemies from every direction
and they will scatter the people of Elam in all of those directions.

The people of Elam will be exiled to every nation on the earth.

³⁷Because I am very angry with the people of Elam,

I will enable their enemies to smash Elam;

I will cause the people of Elam to experience great disasters.

I will enable their enemies, who want to kill them, to pursue them and kill them with swords
until I completely get rid of all of them.

³⁸I, Yahweh, will judge them there,

and then I will get rid of their king and his officials.

³⁹But some day, I will enable the people of Elam to return to their land.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 50

¹Yahweh gave to Jeremiah the prophet a message about Babylon and the country of Babylonia.

²This is what Yahweh says:

"Proclaim a message among the nations;

do not withhold any of it;

raise up a signal flag

to announce that Babylon will be captured.

Its chief god Marduk, whose other name is Bel, will be completely disgraced,

and all the other statues and idols will be shattered.

³The army of a nation will come from the north to attack Babylon

and destroy the city very thoroughly,

with the result that no one will live there again.

Both people and animals will run away."

⁴"But I, Yahweh, say that in the future, when that is about to happen,

the people of Israel and the people of Judah will join together.

They will be weeping

and wanting to worship me, their God.

⁵They will inquire about the road to Jerusalem,

and then they will start traveling toward it.

They will say to each other,

'We must return to Yahweh again!'

They will make an everlasting agreement with me that they will never forget.

⁶My people have been like lost sheep.

Their leaders have caused them to abandon me

like shepherds who have allowed their sheep to wander in the hills and mountains.

My people are like sheep

that do not know the path to return to the sheepfold.

⁷All their enemies who found them attacked them.

They said, 'We did not sin by attacking them,

because they sinned against Yahweh;

he is the one who provides what they need;

he is the one to whom they should have remained faithful;

he is the one whom their ancestors confidently expected to help them.'

⁸But now, I say to the leaders of my people, 'Depart from Babylon!

Leave the land of Babylonia!

Act like male goats that go in front of the rest of the flock;

lead my people back to their own land.

⁹Do that because I am going to gather an army of great nations to the north of Babylon.

They will join together to attack Babylon and will capture it.

Their arrows will be like skilled warriors

that always hit what they are aiming at.

¹⁰Babylonia will be conquered,

and those who conquer it will take away everything they want.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹¹"You people of Babylon who plundered my chosen people,

now you are very happy.

You run around joyfully like a calf in a meadow,

and are happy like stallions are happy when they are neighing.

¹²But soon your people will be very disgraced as a result of being conquered.

Your country will be the most insignificant nation;

it will be a wilderness, a dry land and a desert plain.

¹³Because I, Yahweh, am angry with you people of Babylon,
I will cause your city to become completely deserted.

All who pass by will be horrified
and will gasp because of the destruction there.

¹⁴All you nations that surround Babylon,
prepare to attack it!
Tell your archers to shoot at their enemies;
shoot all of your arrows at them and do not hold back,
because the people of Babylon have sinned against me, Yahweh.

¹⁵Shout victorious war cries against Babylon from all sides of the city.
The soldiers of Babylon will surrender;
the towers and walls will be torn down.
It is I, Yahweh, who will be getting revenge on the people of Babylon,
and I will use you to get revenge.
Do to the people of Babylon what they have done to others!

¹⁶Take away from Babylon those who plant crops
and those who reap the harvests!
Because of the swords carried by those who will attack Babylon,
the people in Babylon who have come from other countries
should all run away; they should go back to their own countries."

¹⁷"The Israelite people are like sheep
that have been scattered by lions.
First the army of the king of Assyria defeated them.
Then the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon smashed them.

¹⁸So this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say:
'Now I will punish the king of Babylon and the people of his land,
like I punished the king of Assyria.

¹⁹And I will bring the people of Israel back to their own land
where they will eat the food that grows in the fields of the regions of Carmel and Bashan,
and the people in the hill areas of Ephraim and Gilead will have all they want to eat.

²⁰At that time, there will not be people in Israel and in Judah who are still guilty for having sinned,

because I will forgive the small group of people whom I enable to still be alive.”

²¹“So, I, Yahweh, say to the enemies of Babylonia, ‘Attack the people who live in the region of Merathaim and the people in the region of Pekod of Babylonia.

Pursue them to kill them, and completely get rid of every single one of them, as I have commanded you to do.

²²Shout your battle cries throughout the land; shout when you are causing great destruction.

²³The army of Babylon is like the most powerful hammer on the earth, but it will be completely shattered. Babylon, one of the nations, will be a complete ruin.’

²⁴You people of Babylon, listen, because I have set a trap for you without your awareness; you will be caught in that trap, because you fought against me.

²⁵It is as though I have opened the place where I store my weapons, and I have brought out all the weapons to use against the people with whom I am angry. I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, have a lot of work to do to punish the people of Babylonia.

²⁶So, you enemies of Babylonia, come from distant lands and attack it. Break open the places where they store the grain, and pile up the rubble like heaps of grain. Destroy everything completely; do not leave anything that is not destroyed.

²⁷Destroy all the young warriors who are as strong as bulls; take them to where you will slaughter them. It will be terrible for them, because it will be time for them to be punished.

²⁸Listen to the people who have fled and escaped from Babylon while they tell in Jerusalem how I, Yahweh, have gotten revenge against those who destroyed my temple in Jerusalem.

²⁹Summon archers to come to attack Babylon;

surround the city

in order that no one will escape.

Do to the people of Babylon what they have done to others,
because they have defied me, the Holy One of the Israelite people.

³⁰The young men of Babylon will fall in the streets;

all their soldiers will be killed in one day. This will happen because I, Yahweh, have declared it!

³¹I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say this:

'You arrogant people,

it is now the time;

it is the day when I will punish you.

³²Your land is full of proud people,

but you will stumble and fall,

and no one will lift you up again.

I will light a fire in the cities of Babylonia

that will burn up everything that is nearby.'

³³I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also say this:

'The people of Israel and Judah were oppressed;

those who captured them guarded them carefully and would not allow them to leave Babylon.

³⁴But Yahweh is strong, and he will free them.

Yahweh is the Commander of the angel armies;

He will defend his people

and enable them to return to their land where they will have peace,

but the people of Babylonia will not have peace.

³⁵He will send enemy soldiers carrying swords to strike the people of Babylonia;

they will strike the officials and wise men

and all the other people who live in Babylon.

³⁶They will strike their false prophets with swords

and they will become foolish.

They will strike the strongest warriors of Babylonia,

and they will all be terrified.

³⁷They will strike their horses and chariots

and the foreign mercenaries who are in the army of Babylonia,
and they will all become as weak as women.

They will seize all the valuable things there in Babylon
and take them away.

³⁸Yahweh will cause the streams to become dry.

He will do all those things because the entire land of Babylonia is filled with idols,
and those horrible idols have caused the people who worship them to become crazy.

³⁹Soon only jackals and other wild creatures will live there;

and it will be a place where ostriches live.

People will never live there again;

it will be uninhabited forever.

⁴⁰Yahweh God will destroy Babylon like he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby towns;
no one will ever live there again.

⁴¹Look! A great army will come from the north.

A great nation far away with many kings is preparing to attack you people of Babylon.

⁴²Their army has bows and arrows and spears;

they are very cruel, and do not act mercifully to anyone.

As they ride along on their horses,

the sound of the horses' hooves is like the roaring of the ocean waves;

they are riding in battle formation

to attack you, you people of Babylon.

⁴³The king of Babylon heard their report,

"The enemy is approaching."

So he was frightened and became weak.

Fear and anguish gripped him,

like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby."

⁴⁴I, Yahweh, will come to Babylon suddenly like a lion comes out of the jungle

and leaps on the sheep that are eating the good pastureland.

I will quickly chase the people of Babylonia from their land.

And then I will appoint for them a leader whom I will choose;

I will do that because there is no one like me who can say that what I have done is not right.

No ruler can oppose me.

⁴⁵Listen to what I have planned to do to the people of Babylon city and the rest of Babylonia:
even the little children will be dragged away,
and I will completely destroy the people who live there.

⁴⁶When Babylon is destroyed, the noise will be extremely loud,
with the result that the earth will shake,
and the wailing of the people will be heard by the people of other nations.”

Chapter 51

¹This is what Yahweh says:

“I will inspire an army to destroy Babylon like a powerful wind,
and also to destroy the people of Babylonia in Leb Kamai.

²I will send a foreign army to come to get rid of Babylonia
like a strong wind that blows away chaff.
They will attack from every direction
on that day of disaster.

³I will tell them, ‘Do not allow the archers of Babylon to have time to put on their armor
or draw their bows.

Do not spare the young men of Babylon.

Completely destroy their army.’

⁴Their soldiers will fall dead in Babylonia;
they will die after being impaled by spears in the streets.

⁵I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, have not abandoned Israel and Judah.
Even though their land was filled with people who sinned against me, the Holy God of Israel,
I am still their God.

⁶You people of Israel and Judah, flee from Babylon!

Run to escape!

Do not stay there and be killed when the people of Babylon are punished!

It will be the time when Yahweh gets revenge;

He will do to them what they deserve.

⁷Babylon has been like a gold cup in Yahweh’s hand, a cup that is full of wine

that caused people all over the earth who drank some of it to become drunk.

It is as though the rulers of the nations drank the wine from Babylon,
and it caused them to become crazy.

⁸But suddenly Babylon will be conquered.

Weep for its people!

Give them medicine for their wounds;
perhaps they can be healed."

⁹We foreigners would have tried to heal them,

but now they cannot be healed.

So we will not try to help them; we will abandon them,

and return to our own lands,

because it is as though the punishment they are receiving reaches up to the clouds in the sky;

it is very great, with the result that no one can measure it.

¹⁰Yahweh has vindicated us;

so let us proclaim in Jerusalem everything that Yahweh our God has done for us.

¹¹You enemy soldiers, sharpen your arrows!

Fill up your quivers for battle,

because Yahweh has incited your kings of Media and Persia to march with their armies to Babylon and to destroy it.

That is how Yahweh will get revenge on those foreigners who entered his temple in Jerusalem and defiled it.

¹²Lift up a battle flag close to the walls of Babylon!

Reinforce the guards,

and tell the watchmen to stand in their positions!

Prepare an ambush,

because Yahweh is about to accomplish all that he has planned to do to the people of Babylon.

¹³Babylon is a city near the great Euphrates River,

a city in which there are many rich people,

but it is time for Babylon to be finished;

the time for the city to exist is ended.

¹⁴Yahweh, commander of the angel armies has solemnly promised, using his own name,

"Your cities will be filled with your enemies;

I will cause them to be like a swarm of locusts;

and they will shout triumphantly when they conquer your city.”

¹⁵Yahweh created the earth by his power;

he established it by his wisdom,

and he stretched out the sky by his understanding.

¹⁶When he speaks loudly, there is thunder in the sky;

he causes clouds to form in every part of the earth.

He sends lightning with the rain

and releases the winds from his storehouses.

¹⁷People are as senseless as a beast, and they know very little;

those who make idols are always disappointed,

because their idols do nothing for them.

The images that they make are not real gods;

they are lifeless.

¹⁸Idols are worthless; they deserve to be ridiculed;

there will be a time when they will all be destroyed.

¹⁹But the God of Israel is not like those idols;

he is the one who created everything that exists;

we, the tribe of Israel, belong to him;

his name is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

²⁰Yahweh says about the army of Babylonia,

“You are like my weapons of war and my war club;

with your power I shatter nations

and destroy many kingdoms.

²¹With your power I shatter armies of other nations:

I destroy their horses and their riders, their chariots and their chariot drivers.

²²With your power I shatter men and women,

old people and children,

young men and young women.

²³With your power I shatter shepherds and their flocks of sheep,

farmers and their oxen,

governors and their officials.”

²⁴But, Yahweh also says,

“Soon I will repay you people in Babylon and in the rest of Babylonia
for all the evil things that you have done in Jerusalem.

²⁵Babylonia is like a great mountain

from which bandits descend to plunder people all over the earth.

But I, Yahweh, am the enemy of you people of Babylonia.

I will raise my fist to strike you.

I will knock you down from the cliffs

and cause you to be only a huge pile of burned rubble.

²⁶Your city will be abandoned forever;

even the stones in your city will never again be used for buildings.

Your city will be completely destroyed.”

²⁷Tell the nations to lift up a battle flag!

Tell them to blow their trumpets of war!

Gather all their armies to fight against Babylon!

Prepare the nations to attack Babylon.

Summon the armies of the kingdoms north of Babylonia—from Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.

Appoint a commander for them,

and bring a great number of horses;

there must be a huge number of horses; that huge number will resemble a swarm of locusts.

²⁸Prepare the armies of other nations,

armies that will be led by the kings of Media and Persia,

their governors and their officials.

²⁹When they attack Babylon, it will be as though the earth will shake and writhe in pain,

because those armies will accomplish everything that Yahweh has planned to do to Babylon.

Then the nations will destroy it completely,

with the result that no one will live there again.

³⁰When their enemies attack, the strongest warriors in Babylon will not fight.

They will remain in their barracks, without any strength.

They will be as timid as women.

The enemy soldiers will burn the buildings in the city

and break the bars of the city gates into pieces.

³¹Messengers will go quickly, one after another,
to tell the king that his city has been captured.

³²The places at which people can cross the river to escape from the city will be blocked.
The dry reeds in the marshes will be set on fire,
and the soldiers of Babylon will be terrified.

³³This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says;
"Babylon is like wheat on the ground where it is about to be threshed
by animals tramping on it.
Very soon their enemies will trample on the city of Babylon."

³⁴The army of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, has attacked and crushed us Israelites,
and we have no strength left.
It is as though they have swallowed us like a great monster
that filled its belly with all our tasty parts,
and then has spit out what it did not like.

³⁵So the people of Jerusalem say to Yahweh,
"Cause the people of Babylon to suffer
like they caused us to suffer!
Cause the people of Babylonia to be punished for killing our people!"

³⁶And this is what Yahweh replies to the people of Jerusalem:
"I will be like your lawyer to defend you,
and I will avenge you.

I will dry up the river in Babylon
and all the springs of water.

³⁷Babylon will become a heap of ruins,
a place where jackals live.
It will become a place that people are horrified about and will ridicule;
it will be a place where no one lives.

³⁸The people of Babylon will all roar like young lions;
they will growl like baby lions.

³⁹But while they are extremely hungry,

I will prepare a different kind of feast for them.

I will cause them to drink wine until they are very drunk,
with the result that they will fall asleep.

But they will never wake up from that sleep!

⁴⁰I will bring them down to a place where they will be slaughtered,
like someone who takes lambs or rams or goats to where they will be slaughtered for sacrifices.

⁴¹People all over the earth now honor Babylon;
they say that it is a great city.

But it will become a place about which people of all nations are horrified.

⁴²The enemies of Babylon will cover the city like huge waves of the sea.

⁴³The towns in Babylonia will be a horror, a dry and desert plain,
and it will be a land in which no one lives
and which no one walks through.

⁴⁴And I will punish Bel, the god that the people of Babylon worship,
and I will cause the people to give back what they have stolen.
People of other nations will no longer come to worship Bel.
And the walls of Babylon will collapse.”

⁴⁵Yahweh also says, “My people, come out of Babylon!

Flee to escape!

Run, because I, Yahweh, am extremely angry with the people of Babylon, and I will get rid of them!

⁴⁶Do not be discouraged or afraid
when you hear reports about what is happening in Babylon.

People will report rumors like that every year,
rumors about violent things being done in the land,
and rumors about leaders fighting against each other.

⁴⁷But it will soon be the time for me to get rid of the carved idols in Babylon.
People all over the land will be ashamed because of being defeated,
and the corpses of their soldiers will lie in the streets.

⁴⁸Then all the angels in heaven and all the people on the earth will rejoice,
because from the north will come armies that will destroy Babylon.

⁴⁹Like the soldiers of Babylon killed the people of Israel

and also killed others all over the world,
the people of Babylon must also be killed.

⁵⁰You Israelite people who have not been killed, get out of Babylon!

Do not wait!

Even though you are in a land far away from Israel,
think about Yahweh, and think about Jerusalem!"

⁵¹The Israelite people say,

"We are ashamed.

We are completely disgraced,
because foreigners have entered Yahweh's temple and defiled it."

⁵²Yahweh replies, "That is true, but there will soon be a time when I will destroy the carved idols in Babylon,
and throughout Babylonia there will be wounded people who will groan.

⁵³Even if the walls around Babylon could extend up to the sky,

and if its walls were extremely strong,

I will send armies that will destroy the city.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

⁵⁴Listen to the people of Babylon shouting for help!

And listen to the sounds of things being destroyed all over Babylonia!

⁵⁵Yahweh will be destroying Babylon.

He will cause the loud noises in the city to cease.

⁵⁶Enemy troops will surge against the city like a great wave.

They will capture the city's mighty soldiers

and break their weapons.

That will happen because Yahweh is a God who punishes his enemies justly;

he will punish them as they deserve.

⁵⁷Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says,

"I will cause the city officials and wise men, the army captains and soldiers, to become drunk.

They will fall asleep,

but they will never wake up again!"

⁵⁸Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also says,

"The thick walls around Babylon will be flattened to the ground.

The city gates will be burned.

People from other countries will work hard to save the city,

but it will be in vain,

because everything that they have built will be destroyed by fire.”

⁵⁹Seraiah, son of Neraiah and grandson of Mahseiah, was an important servant of King Zedekiah. After Zedekiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years, the prophet Jeremiah gave him a message. This was when Seraiah was about to go to Babylon with the king. ⁶⁰Now Jeremiah had written on a scroll a list of all the disasters that he had written about, disasters that would soon happen to Babylon. ⁶¹Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you arrive in Babylon, read aloud everything that I have written on this scroll. ⁶²Then pray, ‘Yahweh, you said that you will thoroughly destroy Babylon, with the result that people and animals will no longer live there. You said that it will be desolate forever.’ ⁶³Then, when you have finished reading what is written on the scroll, tie it to a heavy stone and throw it into the Euphrates River. ⁶⁴Then say, ‘In the same way, Babylon and its people will disappear and never exist again, because of the disasters that Yahweh will bring to it.’”

This is the end of Jeremiah’s messages.

Chapter 52

¹Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of a man named Jeremiah from Libnah. ²Zedekiah did many things that Yahweh says are evil, like his father Jehoiakim had done. ³The events described here happened because Yahweh was angry with the people of Jerusalem and of other places in Judah, and finally he exiled them and said that he did not want to have anything to do with them anymore.

Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ⁴So, on the tenth day of the tenth month, when Zedekiah had been ruling for almost nine years, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army to attack Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built dirt ramps up to the top of the city walls to enable them to attack the city. ⁵They continued to surround Jerusalem until Zedekiah had been ruling for almost eleven years.

⁶When Zedekiah had been ruling for almost eleven years, on the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the famine in the city had become very severe, and there was no more food for the people to eat. ⁷Then the soldiers of Babylonia broke through a section of the city wall, and all the Israelite soldiers fled. But because the city was surrounded by soldiers from Babylonia, Zedekiah and the Israelite soldiers waited until it became dark. Then they left the city through the gate between the two walls behind the king’s garden. Then they ran toward the plain along the Jordan. ⁸But the soldiers of Babylonia pursued King Zedekiah, and they caught up with him on the plains near Jericho. He was alone because all his men had all deserted him and had scattered. ⁹The soldiers of Babylonia took him to the king of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the region of Hamath. There the king of Babylon told his soldiers what they should do to punish Zedekiah. ¹⁰They forced Zedekiah to watch while they killed his sons and all the officials from Judah. ¹¹Then they gouged out Zedekiah’s eyes. They fastened him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon. They put him in a prison, and he remained there until the day that he died.

¹²On the tenth day of the fifth month of that year, which was when King Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for almost nineteen years, Nebuzaradan, who was the captain of the king’s bodyguards and one of the king’s officials, arrived in Jerusalem. ¹³He commanded his soldiers to burn down the temple of Yahweh, the king’s palace, and all the houses in Jerusalem. They also destroyed all the important buildings in the city. ¹⁴Then he supervised the soldiers from Babylonia while they tore down the walls on all sides of Jerusalem. ¹⁵Then Nebuzaradan forced to go to Babylon some of the poorest people, those Israelites who had said they would support the king of Babylon, the rest of the craftsmen, and other people who had remained in Jerusalem. ¹⁶But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the very poor people to remain in Judah to take care of the vineyards and fields.

¹⁷The soldiers from Babylonia broke into pieces the huge bronze pillars that were in front of the temple, and the large bronze water tank called "The Sea," and the ten bronze water carts, and they took all the bronze to Babylon.

¹⁸They also took away the basins for holding the ashes from the burned sacrifices, the shovels for cleaning out the ashes, the tools for snuffing out the wicks of the lamps, the basins for holding the blood of the sacrificed animals, the dishes for incense, and all the other bronze items that were used when they made sacrifices at the temple.

¹⁹Nebuzaradan also told his soldiers to take away the small bowls, the dishes for burning incense, the basins, pots, lampstands, bowls for incense, and the bowls used for pouring out the wine offerings. They took all the other items that were made of pure gold or silver.

²⁰The bronze from the two pillars, the large water tank called "The Sea" and the twelve statues of oxen that were beneath it, and the water carts, was more than they could weigh. Those things had been made for the temple during the time that Solomon was the king. ²¹Each of the pillars was 27 feet tall and 18 feet around. They were hollow, and each had sides that were 3 inches thick. ²²The bronze head on the top of each pillar was seven and one-half feet high and was decorated all around with a bronze network of figures that represented pomegranates. ²³There was a total of one hundred figures of pomegranates on the network at the top, 96 of which could be seen from the ground.

²⁴When Nebuzaradan returned to Babylon, he took with him as prisoners Seraiah the high priest, Zephaniah who was Seraiah's deputy, and the three men who guarded the entrances to the temple. ²⁵He found some other people who were hiding in the city. So from them he took a commander of the army of Judah, seven of the king's advisors, the army commander's chief secretary who was in charge of recruiting soldiers for the army, and sixty other soldiers. ²⁶Nebuzaradan took them all to the king of Babylon, who was still at Riblah. ²⁷There at Riblah in the Hamath region, the king of Babylon commanded that they all be executed.

Many of the people of Judah were forced to leave their own land. ²⁸The number of people who were captured and sent to Babylon at that time, when Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for almost seven years, was 3,023. ²⁹Then, when he had been ruling for almost eighteen years, his soldiers took 832 more from Jerusalem to Babylonia. ³⁰When he had been ruling almost twenty-three years, he sent Nebuzaradan to Jerusalem again, and he brought back 745 more Israelites to Babylonia. That was a total of 4,600 Israelites who were taken to Babylonia.

³¹After King Jehoiachin of Judah had been in prison in Babylon for almost thirty-seven years, Awel-Marduk became the king of Babylon. He was kind to Jehoiachin and ordered that he be released from prison. That was on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month of the year that Awel-Marduk became king. ³²He always spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and gave him a position in which he was honored more than all the other kings who had been exiled to Babylon. ³³He supplied new clothes for Jehoiachin, to replace the clothes that he had been wearing in prison. He also allowed Jehoiachin to eat with him every day, all during the rest of his life. ³⁴Every day, the king of Babylon gave him some money to buy the things that he needed. That continued until the day that Jehoiachin died.

Lamentations

Chapter 1

¹Jerusalem was once full of people,
but now it is completely deserted.

Once it was a powerful nation,
but now it is alone, like a widow.

Once everyone in the world honored it like a king's daughter,
but now it is like a slave.

²We in the city weep bitterly all during the nights,
with tears flowing down our cheeks.

We did not trust Yahweh to help us, and the people groups that we did trust failed to help us;
none of those people comfort us now.

All the people groups that were friends with us have betrayed us;
they are all now our enemies.

³The people of Judah have become poor
and have suffered greatly.

Almost all of our people
were forced to leave our land.

We now live in another country
and we have no peace.

When the people of Judah were unable to defend ourselves,
that was when our enemies captured us.

⁴The roads to Mount Zion are empty
because no one comes here to celebrate the sacred festivals any longer.

No elders or leaders sit under the city gates to talk any more,
and Jerusalem's priests groan in sorrow.

The young women left in Jerusalem cry
because they are suffering greatly.

⁵Our enemies are now masters of our city,

and they prosper.

Yahweh has punished us, the people of Jerusalem,
because of all the sins that we have committed.

Our enemies have taken all our children
and made them go to other countries.

⁶Jerusalem was a beautiful city,
but it is not beautiful now.

The leaders of our city are like deer that are starving
because they can find no grass to eat.

They are very weak
and cannot run from our enemies.

⁷We, the people of Jerusalem, are sad and have no more homes to live in;
we think about all the splendid things that once filled our city.

But now our enemies have captured the city,
and there is no one to help us.

Our enemies destroyed our city
and laughed while they were doing it.

⁸We, the people of Jerusalem, have sinned very much;
our city has become like a bloody rag between a woman's legs.
Everyone who previously honored our city now despise it;
they are like people who strip a woman bare and then mock her.

Now we groan in the city;
we are like a woman without clothes who tries to cover herself with her hands.

⁹It is as if our city has become filthy because we have sinned so greatly;
we did not think about how God would punish us.

We did not imagine how we would suffer;
there is no one to comfort us.

We all call out to God, "Yahweh, look at how we are suffering
because our enemies have defeated us!"

¹⁰Our enemies have taken away all our treasures,
all the valuable things that we owned.

People who do not worship you, Yahweh, are going into our sacred temple,
where you had said no foreigner must go into the place where your people worship you.

¹¹All the people in the city cry out with pain
while they search for food.

They have given their most valuable things
to get food to eat to restore their strength.

Yahweh, look at me,
no one values my life.

¹²You people who pass by,
you do not seem to care at all about what has happened to me.

Look around and see that there are no other people who are suffering as I do.
Yahweh has caused me to suffer

because he has punished me on the day he was angry with us, his people.

¹³It is as though he sent a fire from heaven
that burned in my bones;
it is as though he has placed a trap to entangle my feet,
and made me turn back.

He has abandoned me;
I am weak and alone every day, all during the day.

¹⁴He turned the sins that I have committed into a heavy load for me to carry;
it is as though he tied them around my neck.

Previously we were strong,
but he has caused me to become weak.
He has allowed my enemies to capture me,
and I was not able to do anything to resist them.

¹⁵The Lord looked at my mighty soldiers, who kept me safe.
He summoned a great army
to come and crush me to defeat my strong young soldiers.
The Lord has trampled on the people of Judah
as people trample on grapes in a pit to make juice.

¹⁶I weep because of all these things.

My eyes are filled with tears.

There is no one to comfort me.

The one who comforts me is far away from me.

My children have no hope

because the enemy has taken us all captive.

¹⁷The people who lived in Zion (the city of Jerusalem)

have no one to give them comfort.

Yahweh has given the order that the people in nearby nations

will become the enemies of the descendants of our father Jacob (who are also called the Israelites).

Jerusalem has become disgusting to them.

¹⁸But what Yahweh has done to me is fair,

for I had refused to obey what he told me to do.

You people everywhere, listen to me!

Look and see that I am suffering greatly.

My young daughters and brave sons

have been taken away to far off lands.

¹⁹I pleaded with our allies, in whom we trusted, to help,

but they all refused,

they told lies and did not keep their promises.

My priests and my leaders

died within the walls of the city

while they searched for food to eat.

²⁰Yahweh, see that I am suffering very much!

Inside of my body I am in great distress.

I am sad in the center of my being,

because I have rebelled against you

and have caused you great sadness!

Our enemies kill people in the streets with their swords;

and that makes our homes the places where the dead are kept.

²¹Hear my groaning!

but no one came to comfort me.

All our enemies know what happened to me;
they were all happy to hear
about what Yahweh has done to his people.
Please do soon what you have promised,
when our enemies will suffer like we have suffered!
²²Yahweh, let those evil deeds come near to you
so you may see them all!
Punish them as you have punished me
for all my sins!
I suffer and groan very much,
and I faint within my inner self.

Chapter 2

¹The Lord was extremely angry with us;
it was as though he covered Jerusalem with a dark cloud.
Previously it was a beautiful city,
but he has caused it to become a ruin.
At the time he punished Israel,
he even abandoned his temple in Jerusalem.
²The Lord destroyed the homes of the people of Judah;
he did not act mercifully.
Because he was very angry,
he broke down the fortresses of Judah.
He has made our kingdom to be completely helpless, and
he has caused our rulers to lose all honor.
³Because he was extremely angry,
he has caused Israel to not be powerful anymore.
He has refused to assist us
when our enemies attacked us.
He has destroyed Israel
like a raging fire destroys everything.
⁴He has gotten ready to kill us, his people,

as though we were his enemies.

He prepared to kill the people whom we love the most,
members of our own families.

He is extremely angry with us people of Jerusalem;
his anger is like a fire.

⁵The Lord has become like an enemy
to us Israelites; he has destroyed us;
he has destroyed our palaces
and made our fortresses into ruins.
He has gotten rid of many people in Jerusalem,
and caused us to mourn and weep for those who were killed.

⁶He has caused our enemies to smash his temple
as easily as if it had been a hut in a garden.
He has caused us, his people, to forget
all our sacred festivals and Sabbath days.
He has hated our kings and priests
because he was extremely angry with them.

⁷Yahweh has rejected the very altar on which we had sacrificed animals to him;
he has abandoned his temple.
He has allowed our enemies to tear down the walls
of our temple and our palaces.
They shout victoriously in the temple of Yahweh,
like we previously shouted during our sacred festivals.

⁸Yahweh was determined
that our enemies would tear down our city wall.
It was as though he had first measured the walls
and then completely destroyed them.
It was as though he caused the towers and walls to lament
because they were now ruins.

⁹The city gates have collapsed;
the enemy has destroyed the bars that fastened the gates shut.

The king and his officials have been forced to go to other countries,
where no one teaches the laws that God gave to Moses.

The prophets do not receive any visions
because Yahweh does not give them any.

¹⁰The old men of Jerusalem sit on the ground,
and they say nothing.

They are so sad that they wear rough sackcloth
and throw dust on their heads.

The young girls of Jerusalem bow down sorrowfully,
their faces touch the ground.

¹¹My eyes are very tired because of my tears;

I am very grieved within my inner being.

Because very many of my people have died,
in my inner being I grieve and am exhausted.

Even children and babies are fainting
and dying in the streets because they have no food.

¹²They cry out to their mothers,

"We need something to eat and drink!"

They collapse like wounded men
in the streets of the city.

They slowly die

in the arms of their mothers.

¹³You people of Jerusalem,

I cannot say anything to help you.

No people have suffered like you are suffering;

I do not know what I can do to comfort you.

You have fallen just as far

as if you had sunk in the ocean;

there is no one who can bring your city back to what it was.

¹⁴The prophets among you claimed that they had seen visions from Yahweh,
but what they said was false and worthless.

They did not work to save you from your enemies;
they did not tell you that you had sinned.
Instead, they announced to you things that they said Yahweh had told them;
they tempted you to believe them, and you did.

¹⁵All those who pass by you
make fun of you by clapping their hands;
they shake their heads and hiss at you;
They say, "Is this the great city of Jerusalem?
Is it the city that people said was the most beautiful city in the world,
the city that caused all the people on the earth to rejoice?"

¹⁶Now all our enemies laugh at you;
they hate you so much that they hiss at you and grind their teeth at you.
They say, "We have destroyed Israel!
This is what we longed for,
and now it has happened!"

¹⁷Yahweh has done what he planned;
long ago he threatened to destroy you,
and now he has done it.
He has destroyed your city without acting mercifully toward you;
he has enabled your enemies to be happy about defeating you;
he has enabled your enemies to continually become stronger.

¹⁸I wish the city walls could speak like the people who
cry out to Yahweh!
I would tell the walls, "Cry out for help to Yahweh!
Let your tears flow day and night!
Let them flow like rivers.
Do not stop grieving;
do not stop crying."

¹⁹Get up during every night and cry out;
tell Yahweh what you feel in your inner beings.
Raise your arms to plead to him

to act mercifully to prevent our children from dying;
they are fainting on the street corners
because they have no food to eat.

²⁰Yahweh, look at your people and have mercy on us.

Have you ever caused people to suffer like this before?

It is certainly not right that women are eating the flesh of their own children,
the children whom they have always taken care of.

It is not right that our enemies are killing priests and prophets
in your own temple!

²¹The corpses of people of all ages lie in the streets;
there are even corpses of young men and young women whom our enemies have killed with their swords.
Because you were very angry,
you caused them to be killed;
you have slaughtered them
without pitying them at all.

²²You summoned my enemies to attack from every direction,
as though you were calling them to come to a feast.
At that time you showed that you were very angry,
and no one escaped.

Our enemies murdered our little children,
the ones whom we took care of and reared up.

Chapter 3

¹I, the one who am writing this, am a man whom Yahweh made to suffer,
because he was angry.

²It was as though he caused me to walk in a very dark place
without any light at all.

³He has punished me many times,
many times during each day.

⁴He has caused my skin and my flesh to become old.
He has broken my bones.

⁵He has surrounded me with things
that make me suffer very bitterly.

⁶It is as though he has buried me in a dark place
like those who have been dead for a long time.

⁷It is as though he has built a prison wall around me,
and fastened me with heavy chains, so I cannot escape.

⁸Although I call out and cry out for him to help me,
he does not pay attention to me.

⁹It is as though he has blocked my path with a high stone wall
and has caused me to wander everywhere to try to get out.

¹⁰He has waited to attack me
like a bear or a lion hides and waits to attack a man.

¹¹It is as though a bear has dragged me off the path and mauled me,
and left me alone without help.

¹²It is as though he strung his bow and made me the target
to shoot at with his arrows.

¹³It is as though he shot his arrows
deep into my body.

¹⁴All my relatives laugh at me;
all during each day they sing songs that make fun of me.

¹⁵Yahweh has made me suffer greatly,
like someone suffers after drinking something very bitter.

¹⁶It is as though he has caused me to chew gravel that broke my teeth;
it is as though he has trampled me in the ground.

¹⁷Things no longer go well for me;
I no longer remember being prosperous.

¹⁸I continue to say to myself, "I am not strong enough to bear any more hardships.
I no longer expect that Yahweh will rescue me."

¹⁹When I think about how I suffer and how I wander far from home,
it is like drinking a very bitter liquid.

²⁰I will never forget this time

when I feel very depressed.

²¹However, I confidently expect Yahweh to do good things for me again,
and this I know is true.

²²Yahweh never stops faithfully loving us, and he shows his compassion for us forever.
He never stops acting kindly toward us.

²³Every morning he acts mercifully toward us again.
He is the one in whom we can always trust.

²⁴So I sincerely say to myself, "Yahweh gives me what I need!"
Because I believe this, I will confidently wait for him to do good things for me.

²⁵Yahweh is good to all those who depend on him,
to those who seek him to help them.

²⁶So it is good for us to wait quietly
for Yahweh to save us.

²⁷And it is good for us to suffer patiently
while we are young.

²⁸Those who seek him to help them should sit by themselves and not complain,
because they know that it is Yahweh who has allowed them to suffer.

²⁹They should lie in the dirt, with their faces on the ground,
because they can still hope that Yahweh will help them.

³⁰If someone strikes us on one cheek,
we should turn the other cheek toward that person in order that he may strike it, too,
and accept it when others insult us.

³¹The Lord does not abandon his people forever.

³²Sometimes he causes us to suffer,
but he also acts kindly toward us
because he continually and faithfully loves us.

³³And he does not take pleasure when he causes people to suffer
or be sad.

³⁴If people mistreat and oppress all the prisoners,

³⁵or if they rebel against God
by refusing to do for others what is right,

³⁶or if they cause judges to decide matters unjustly,
the Lord certainly sees all these things.

³⁷No one can make something happen
unless Yahweh has already decided that it should happen.

³⁸God in heaven is the one who commands that disasters should happen,
and he also causes good things to happen.

³⁹So it is certainly not right for us, who are only people on earth, to complain
when he punishes us for the sins that we have committed.

⁴⁰Instead, we should think carefully about how we behave;
we should turn back to Yahweh.

⁴¹We should pray with all our inner beings and lift up our arms
toward God in heaven, and say,

⁴²"We have sinned and rebelled against you,
and you have not forgiven us.

⁴³You have been very angry and chased after us;
you have slaughtered us without pitying us.

⁴⁴You have hidden yourself away, as if you were in a cloud,
so that you will not hear us when we pray.

⁴⁵You have made us go among the foreign peoples,
and they think we are only garbage.

⁴⁶All our enemies have spoken things to insult us.

⁴⁷We are constantly afraid that people will trap us,
because we have experienced so many disasters and so much ruin.

⁴⁸Many tears flow from my eyes
because my people have been destroyed.

⁴⁹My tears continually flow;
they will not stop

⁵⁰until Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees us.

⁵¹I am very grieved
because of what has happened to the women of my city.

⁵²My enemies hunted for me

like people hunt for a bird to kill it
even though there was no reason for them to do that.

⁵³They threw me into a pit to kill me,
and placed a heavy stone over the top of it.

⁵⁴The water in the pit rose above my head,
and I said to myself, 'I am about to die!'

⁵⁵But from the bottom of the pit I cried out to you,
'Yahweh, help me!'

⁵⁶I pleaded with you,
'Do not refuse to hear me when I cry out to you!'

⁵⁷Then you answered me
and said, 'Do not be afraid!'

⁵⁸Yahweh, you argued for me when people wanted to condemn me and execute me;
you did not allow me to die.

⁵⁹Now, Yahweh, you have seen the evil things that my enemies have done to me,
so judge my case and show that I have done nothing wrong.

⁶⁰You know the evil things
that they are planning to do to me.

⁶¹Yahweh, you have heard them insult me;
you have heard what they plan to do to me.

⁶²Every day they whisper and mutter things about me,
all during the day.

⁶³Look at them! Whatever they are doing at the moment,
they make fun of me by the songs that they sing.

⁶⁴Yahweh, give them what they deserve!
Pay them back for what they have done to me!

⁶⁵You permit them to do whatever they want,
and you punish them by taking away their shame.
That is why your curse is upon them.

⁶⁶Because you are angry with them, pursue them and get rid of them,
until none of them remain on the earth."

Chapter 4

¹Previously our people were like pure gold,
but now they are worthless.

Just as our enemies have scattered the sacred stones in the temple,
so they have also scattered our young men.

²The young men of Jerusalem were as valuable as large amounts of gold,
but now people consider them to be as worthless as ordinary clay pots.

³Even the female jackals feed their pups,
but my people act cruelly toward their own children;
the mothers are like ostriches in the desert that abandon their eggs.

⁴My people's infants' tongues cling to the roofs of their mouths
because they are extremely thirsty;
the children plead for some food,
but no one gives them any.

⁵People who previously ate fine food
are now starving in the streets;
those who previously wore fine clothes
now lie upon the rubbish heaps with nothing to eat.

⁶The people of Sodom died very suddenly in a disaster.
But God punished my people
more severely than the people of Sodom,
and no one was concerned about all that we suffered.

⁷Our leaders used to be like pure snow or white milk,
they were so clean and spotless.
Their bodies were healthy,
pink like coral and brilliant like sapphires.

⁸Now our leaders' faces are blacker than soot,
and no one recognizes them when they walk in the streets.
Their skin has shriveled and it hangs on their bones,
and it has become as dry as a stick of wood.

⁹It is better to die in a battle

than to die of hunger.

There was no food to harvest in the fields,

so the people slowly starved until they died.

¹⁰Women who usually acted with love and compassion

have killed and cooked their own children;

they ate them when there was no other food,

when Jerusalem was being destroyed by attacking armies.

¹¹Yahweh has shown to everyone how angry he was with his people!

His anger spread like a fire in Zion (the city of Jerusalem)

that burned the city down to its rock foundations.

¹²None of the kings on the earth or anyone else

believed that any of our enemies could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³But that is what happened;

it happened because the prophets sinned;

the priests also sinned

by causing innocent people to die.

¹⁴The priests and prophets wander through the streets

as though they were blind.

No one will touch them

because their clothes are stained with the blood of those innocent people.

¹⁵These people shouted at the priests and prophets, saying,

"Stay away from us! Do not touch us!"

So the priests and prophets have fled from Israel,

and they wander around from one country to another,

but people in each country keep saying to them, "You cannot stay here!"

¹⁶It is Yahweh himself who has scattered them;

he no longer is concerned about them.

People do not welcome our priests any longer, and they care nothing for the elders.

¹⁷We continued to look for someone to help us before it was too late,

but it was useless.

We continued to watch to see if one of our allies would save us,
but none of the nations that we were waiting for was willing to help us.

¹⁸Our enemies were pursuing us,
so we could not even walk in our streets because they could take us as prisoners.
Our enemies were about to capture us;
it was time for them to kill us.

¹⁹Those who ran after us were faster than eagles flying in the sky.
Even if we fled to the mountains
or hid in the desert,
they went there ahead of us and waited to attack us.

²⁰Our king, whom Yahweh had appointed,
the one who enabled us to live,
the one whom we trusted to protect us
when we had to live in the other nations as slaves—
the enemy captured him,
as you would capture an animal in a pit.

²¹You people of Edom and Uz,
you should be happy while you can,
but Yahweh will punish you also.
You will become so drunk that you will strip off your own clothes.

²²You people of Zion (whose home is in Jerusalem),
the time when Yahweh punishes you for your sins will come to an end.
He will bring an end to the time you must spend in exile.
But you people who are from Edom, Yahweh will punish you for your sins
and he will make known to everyone the wicked things you have done.

Chapter 5

¹Yahweh, think about what has happened to us.
See how no one respects us any longer.

²Foreigners have seized our property,
and now they live in our homes.

- ³Our enemies have killed our fathers,
and caused our mothers to become widows.
- ⁴Now they make us pay for water to drink,
and pay for firewood.
- ⁵The enemy runs after us and is very close to us;
we are exhausted, but they do not allow us to rest.
- ⁶In order to get enough food to remain alive,
we begged Egypt and Assyria to help us.
- ⁷Our ancestors sinned, and now they are dead,
but we are suffering for the sins that they committed.
- ⁸Now the people who rule over us are themselves slaves to their own masters in Babylon.
There is no one who can rescue us from their power.
- ⁹We go far to look for food, but we are in danger of dying when we do so,
because of the robbers who live in the wilderness.
- ¹⁰Our skin has become hot like an oven,
and we have a very high fever because we are extremely hungry.
- ¹¹Our enemies have violated the women in Jerusalem,
and they have done that to the young women in all the towns of Judea.
- ¹²Our enemies have hanged our leaders,
and they have not respected our elders.
- ¹³They force our young men to grind flour with millstones,
and young boys stagger while they are forced to carry heavy loads of firewood.
- ¹⁴Our elders no longer sit at the city gates to make important decisions;
the young men no longer play their musical instruments.
- ¹⁵We are no longer joyful;
instead of dancing joyfully, we now mourn.
- ¹⁶The wreaths of flowers have fallen off our heads.
Terrible things have happened to us because of the sins that we committed.
- ¹⁷We are tired and discouraged,
and we cannot see well because our eyes are full of tears.
- ¹⁸Jerusalem has no one living any more in it,

and jackals prowl around in it.

¹⁹But Yahweh, you rule forever!

You continue to rule from one generation to the next generation.

²⁰So why have you forgotten us?

Will you abandon us for a very long time?

²¹Please enable us to return to you,

and enable us to prosper as we did previously.

²²Please do that, or is it really true that you have rejected us forever?

Is it really true that you will never stop being extremely angry with us?

Ezekiel

Chapter 1

¹⁻²“When I, Ezekiel, was thirty years old, I was living among the Israelite people by the Kebar Canal, which was south of Babylon. The Babylonians had taken us from the land of Judah and brought us here. On the fifth day of the fourth month of that year, it was as though the sky opened and I saw visions from God.

The fifth day of the fourth month was almost five years after King Jehoiachin had been exiled.” ³So God gave Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, messages in Babylonia while he was beside the Kebar Canal. Yahweh’s power went to him there.

⁴In one of the visions, I saw a windstorm coming from the north. There was a huge cloud, and lightning was flashing within it continually, and a brilliant light surrounded the cloud. In the center of where the lightning was flashing, there was amber-colored fire. ⁵In the center of the storm I saw what resembled four living creatures. They resembled humans, ⁶but each of them had four faces and four wings. ⁷Their legs were like human legs, but their feet resembled the hooves of calves that shined like polished bronze. ⁸On the four sides of their bodies under their wings there were hands like humans have. ⁹As the four creatures stood there, they formed a circle, with their wings touching each other. They did not turn when they were moving; they went straight ahead.

¹⁰Each of the creatures had four faces. In front there was a face that resembled a human face. The face on the right side resembled a lion’s face. The face on the left side resembled an ox’s face. The face in back resembled an eagle’s face. ¹¹Two of each creature’s wings were lifted up and touched the wings of the creatures that were on either side of it. The other two wings were folded against the creature’s body. ¹²The creatures went straight ahead in whatever direction the Spirit of God, who controlled them, wanted them to go, without changing directions while they were moving. ¹³The four creatures resembled burning coals or torches. A blazing fire moved back and forth among the creatures, and lightning flashed from among them. ¹⁴The creatures were moving back and forth very rapidly, so that they looked like flashes of lightning.

¹⁵While I looked at the four living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each of them. ¹⁶Each of the wheels was the same, and they all shone like beryl. Each wheel seemed to have one wheel inside another wheel. ¹⁷Whenever they moved, they would go straight in one of the four directions that the creatures were facing; they did not turn in another direction while they moved. ¹⁸The rims of the wheels were imposing and frightening, and they were covered with eyes.

¹⁹Whenever the living creatures moved, the wheels moved with them. So whenever the creatures rose up from the ground, the wheels also rose up. ²⁰Wherever the Spirit of God, who controlled the creatures, wanted them to go, they went; and the wheels went with them, because their spirit controlled the wheels. ²¹Whenever the creatures moved, the wheels moved. Whenever the creatures stood still, the wheels stopped. Whenever the creatures rose up from the ground, the wheels rose up with them.

²²Above the heads of the creatures there was something that resembled a dome. It glistened as ice shines, and it was awesome. ²³Under the dome, the creatures stretched out their wings. Each one had two wings that touched the wings of the creatures on either side, and two wings that covered his own body. ²⁴Whenever the creatures moved, their wings made a sound that resembled the crashing of waves in the sea. It also sounded like the voice of Almighty God, and like the noise of a huge army marching. Whenever the creatures stood still on the ground, they lowered their wings. ²⁵While they stood on the ground with their wings lowered, there was a voice from the dome that was over their heads.

²⁶Above the dome was something that resembled a huge throne that was made of a huge sapphire. Sitting on the throne was someone who resembled a human. ²⁷I saw that above his waist he resembled metal that was glowing as though it had a very hot fire inside it. And I saw that below his waist there was a very brilliant light that surrounded him. ²⁸It shone like a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day.

That was the brilliant light that represented the presence of Yahweh. When I saw it, I threw myself flat onto the ground, and I heard him speak!

Chapter 2

¹The voice said to me, "Son of man, stand up while I speak to you." ²While he spoke to me, God's Spirit entered me and enabled me to stand up. Then I heard him speak to me.

³He said, "Son of man, I will send you to the Israelite people. They are people who have turned away from me and rebelled against me. Their ancestors rebelled against me, and they themselves are still rebelling against me. ⁴The people to whom I will send you are very stubborn. But say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you.' ⁵And when you tell them my messages, perhaps those rebellious people will heed those messages and perhaps they will not heed them; but they will know that a prophet has been among them! ⁶And you, son of man, you must not be afraid of them or afraid of what they say. Living among them will be like living in the midst of briers or scorpions, but do not be afraid of them. They are rebellious people, but do not allow them to frighten you. ⁷Tell them my message, but do not expect them to pay attention to it, because they are very rebellious. ⁸But son of man, you must pay attention to what I say. Do not be rebellious like they are. Now open your mouth and eat what I give to you."

⁹Then, as I watched, I saw his hand that was stretched toward me. In his hand was a scroll. ¹⁰He unrolled the scroll. On both sides of it were written words that expressed sorrow and mourning and words about trouble.

Chapter 3

¹He said to me, "Son of Man, eat this scroll that is in front of you. Then go and speak to the Israelite people." ²So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat it.

³Then he said to me, "Son of Man, eat the scroll that I have given to you. Fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and in my mouth it tasted as sweet as honey.

⁴Then he said to me, "Son of Man, go to the Israelite people and tell them my message. ⁵The people to whom I am sending you are not people whose language is very difficult to learn, a language which you do not understand. I am sending you to your Israelite people. ⁶I am sending you to people whose language you do not understand very well. If I were sending you to people whose language was difficult for you to understand, they would pay attention to what you say to them. ⁷But because the Israelite people do not want to listen to me, they will not want to listen to you. They do not want to listen because they are all very rebellious. ⁸But you—I will enable you to be as stubborn and tough as they are. ⁹I will cause you to be as firm as the hardest stone, like flint. So, even though they are very rebellious people, do not be afraid of them; do not allow them to frighten you."

¹⁰He also said to me, "Son of Man, listen very carefully to what I say, and keep thinking about it. ¹¹Go to your fellow Israelites who are here after being exiled, and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says' and then tell them my message, whether they want to hear it or whether they would rather cease to exist."

¹²Then in the vision the Spirit of God lifted me up, and I heard behind me the sound of a large earthquake. (Praise our glorious Yahweh in the place where he lives in heaven!) ¹³I heard the sound of the wings of the four living creatures brushing against each other, and I also heard the sound of the wheels that were beside them. It was a loud sound like an earthquake. ¹⁴The Spirit took me away. Within me I was very bitter and angry, and I felt unable

to do anything, as though Yahweh were pushing down on me very powerfully. ¹⁵I came to the exiles who lived at the town of Tel Aviv near the Kebar Canal in Babylon. Then, where they were living, I sat for seven days. I was shocked about everything that I had seen.

¹⁶After those seven days had ended, Yahweh gave me this message: ¹⁷"Son of Man, I am appointing you to be like a watchman. So listen to these messages that I will give you, and tell them those messages to warn them. ¹⁸When I say about some wicked people, 'They will surely die because of their sins,' if you do not warn them or tell them that they must turn from their wicked behavior if they want to save their lives, they will die because of their sin, and it will be your responsibility since you did not act to prevent it. ¹⁹But if you warn wicked people and they do not turn from all their wicked behavior, they will die because of their sins, but you will have saved yourself from my punishment.

²⁰Similarly, when righteous people turn from their righteous behavior and do evil deeds, and I cause bad things to happen to them, they will die. But you must warn them. If they do not stop their sinful behavior, they will die because of their sins. I will not think about the righteous things that they did previously. But if you have not warned them, I will hold you responsible for their deaths. ²¹But if you warn righteous people not to sin, and they do not sin; they will surely remain alive because they heeded your warning, and you will have saved yourself from my punishment."

²²I felt Yahweh take control, and he spoke to me and said, "Get up and go to the plain, and I will speak to you there." ²³So I got up and went out to the plain. And I saw the glory of Yahweh there, like the glory that I had seen along the Kebar Canal. And I threw myself flat onto the ground.

²⁴Then the Spirit of God entered me and enabled me to stand up. He said to me, "Go into your house and stay inside it. ²⁵People will tie you with ropes, with the result that you will be unable to go out among the people.

²⁶Even though they are very rebellious people, I will cause your tongue to stick to the roof of your mouth, with the result that you will be unable to talk and to rebuke them. ²⁷But then when I speak to you again, I will enable you to talk and tell them 'This is what the Lord Yahweh is saying to you.' The one who wants to hear me will hear me, but the one who ignores the message will come to an end, since they are a rebellious people!"

Chapter 4

¹Yahweh continued and said, "Son of man, take a large clay tablet and scrape lines on it that represent Jerusalem.

²Then draw figures around it to represent enemy soldiers who will build earthworks and forts around the city in order to take it. Set figures around it that represent battering rams. ³Then take an iron pan, and place it to be like an iron wall between you and the carving of the city. Then stare at the image of the city. This means that enemy troops will surround the city to attack it. This will be a warning to the Israelite people.

⁴⁻⁵Then lie on your left side, and stay like that for 390 days. You will be symbolically bearing the punishment for the sins of the Israelites, the northern kingdom; you must lie like that one day for each year that I will punish them.

⁶After that, lie down again. This time, lie on your right side for forty days. That will symbolize that the Judean people, the southern kingdom, will be punished for their sins, one year for each day that you lie there. ⁷Turn your face toward the drawing of Jerusalem and bare your arm like a soldier does who prepares to go into battle, and prophesy about what will happen to the city. ⁸You will not be able to move; it will be as though I have tied you with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished symbolizing how many years the city will be besieged.

⁹Before you do that, take some wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; and put them in a storage jar, and use that to bake bread for yourself. That is what you will eat during the 390 days while you lie on your left side.

¹⁰You will eat about two hundred grams of bread each day throughout the day. ¹¹Also measure out about one-half liter of water to drink each day throughout the day. ¹²Eat that bread like you would eat a loaf of barley bread. But use your own dried dung for fuel to bake the bread while people are watching. ¹³That will symbolize that the

Israelite people will be forced to eat food that is unacceptable to me when they are living in the nations to which I will force them to go.”

¹⁴Then I said, “No, Lord Yahweh! Do not force me to do that! I have never caused myself to become unacceptable to you. From the time when I was young, I have never eaten meat of any animal that was found dead or that had been killed by wild animals. And I have never eaten any meat that is unacceptable to you.”

¹⁵Yahweh replied, “Because of that, I will allow you to bake your bread using dried cow manure instead of human dung for fuel.”

¹⁶Then he said to me, “Son of man, I will cause the supply of food to Jerusalem to be cut off. Then the people will eat the small amounts of food and drink the small amounts of water that their leaders permit them to have, and they will be very distressed and anxious as they do that, ¹⁷because water and food will be very scarce. They will see each other becoming extremely thin, and they will be appalled; but this will happen because they are being punished for the sins that they have committed.”

Chapter 5

¹“Then, son of man, when you start doing those things, take a sharp sword and use it like a barber’s razor to shave your head and your beard. Put the hair that you shaved off on scales, and divide the hair into three equal parts.

²When the time during which you will symbolize that the city will be surrounded by enemy troops ends, put a third of the hair inside the drawing of the city and burn it. Take another third of the hair, scatter it all around the drawing of the city, and then strike it with your sword. That will symbolize that I will strike the people of Jerusalem with their enemies’ swords. Then allow the wind to scatter the other third of the hair. That will symbolize that even if they flee from the city, I will still cause their enemies to pursue them and attack them with swords. ³But take a few of your hairs and tie them to your sleeves. ⁴Then take a few of those hairs, throw them into the fire, and burn them up. That will symbolize that a fire will spread from Jerusalem and destroy things throughout Israel.

⁵This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: This drawing will represent Jerusalem, the city that I have placed in the center of the nations, with other countries around it. ⁶But the wicked people of Jerusalem rebel against obeying my commands, and they show that they are more wicked than the people of the surrounding countries. They rejected my laws and refused to obey my commands.

⁷Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You people of Jerusalem have been more rebellious than the people of the nations around you; you have not obeyed any of my laws. You have not even obeyed the laws of the nations around you!

⁸Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I am opposed to you people of Jerusalem. I will punish you, and the people of other nations will see it. ⁹Because of all your detestable idols and practices, I will punish you people of Jerusalem like I have never done before and will never do again. ¹⁰As a result, parents among you will eat their children, and children will eat their parents because there will be nothing else to eat. I will punish you severely, and I will cause those who will still be alive to be scattered in every direction. ¹¹Therefore, I, Yahweh the Lord, make this declaration! That as surely as I am alive, because you have polluted my temple with all your disgusting idols and with the other awful things that you do, I will no longer bless you. I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you.

¹²One-third of your people will die inside the city because of the plagues they will experience, or by famine. One-third of your people will be killed by your enemies’ swords outside the city. And one-third I will scatter in every direction, but your enemies will still pursue you and kill you with their swords.

¹³Then I will no longer be angry with you; I will stop punishing you after I have avenged myself against you. And when I stop punishing you, you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken to you because I have finished punishing you in my anger.

¹⁴I will cause your city to be a ruins, so that people of other nations that are around you will pass by and see it and sneer at you. ¹⁵They will scorn you and taunt you. When I severely punish you because of my great anger, they will be horrified and you will be a warning to them. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it. ¹⁶And when I cut off your food supply and cause there to be more famine, it will be as though I am shooting at you with my arrows that will destroy you. ¹⁷So I will cause you to experience a famine, and I will send wild beasts to attack you and your children, and all your children will be killed. You will experience plagues and wars, and I will cause your enemies to attack you with their swords. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 6

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, turn toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy about what will happen to them, and say, ³Mountains of Israel, listen to what Yahweh the Lord says to you! He says this to the mountains and the high hills and to the streambeds and the low valleys. He says: I am about to send enemy soldiers with swords to destroy all the hilltops where you worship idols. ⁴They will smash all your altars for worshiping idols and your pillars you use for astronomy, and they will kill many Israelite people in front of their idols. ⁵Their corpses will lie in front of their idols, and their bones will be scattered around their altars. ⁶Wherever you live, your towns will be ruined and the places where idols were worshiped on the hilltops will be smashed. Your altars will be completely smashed, and everything that you own will become a pile of ruins. ⁷Many of your people will be killed right in front of you, and then you will know that I am Yahweh and I do what I say I will do.

⁸But I will allow some of you to remain alive. They will escape death when your enemies scatter you among many other nations. ⁹When that happens, in those nations to which you have been forced to go, those of you who have escaped death will think about me. You will remember that I was very grieved because you turned away from me, because you were disloyal to me, and because you desired to worship your idols. You will hate yourselves because of the evil and detestable things that you have done. ¹⁰And you will realize that I, Yahweh, have punished you. You will realize that when I threatened to punish you, I surely intended to do that.

¹¹So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to you, Ezekiel: Slap your hands and stamp your feet and cry out to show that you are distressed, and groan about what will happen to the Israelite people because of all their wicked and detestable behavior. They will be killed by their enemies' swords, they will die from hunger, and they will die from plagues. ¹²Those who are far from Jerusalem will die from plagues, those who are close to Jerusalem will be killed by their enemies' swords. Those who are still alive after that will die from hunger. That is how I will punish them. ¹³Some of your people's corpses will lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hilltop and on all the mountaintops, under every big tree—at all the places where they burned incense to honor their idols. When this happens you will realize that I, Yahweh, have done this. ¹⁴For I will display my power and cause every area in which they live in your country to become an empty wasteland, from the desert in the far south to the town of Diblah in the far north. Then they will realize that I, Yahweh, have done this."

Chapter 7

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"You, son of man, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to the people of Israel: All of Israel, everything within its borders, will soon be destroyed. ³You people of Israel, the end has come. I will punish you severely. I will judge you for all the wicked things that you have done, and pay you back for your disgusting behavior. ⁴I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you. I will surely punish you for your wicked behavior. Then you will know that it has happened because I, Yahweh, have done it.

⁵This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: You will soon experience many terrible disasters! ⁶This will be the end of Israel; your country will be finished! And your lives will be ended! ⁷It will be the end of you people who live in the land of Israel. The time has come; the day when you will be destroyed is near. At that time the people who worship idols on the mountains will not be happy; they will panic. ⁸I am very angry with you and am about to pour out my punishment on you. I will judge you for all the wicked things that you have done and pay you back for your

disgusting behavior. ⁹I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you. I will surely punish you for your wicked behavior. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have punished you.

¹⁰The day of your punishment is here! It has arrived! Disasters have come as a result of your pride. ¹¹People are acting violently and doing more wicked things. And nothing that belongs to those people will be left, none of their money, and they will not be respected by anyone. ¹²Now is the time; that day has arrived. People who buy things should not rejoice because they bought things very cheaply and those who sell things should not be sad because they had to sell things cheaply, because Yahweh will be punishing everyone. ¹³People who sell some of their property will never be able to buy it back—they will not even be able to return to see it; because they have sinned, not one of them will succeed in staying alive. ¹⁴Your commanders will blow trumpets to get the army ready to fight, but no one will respond, because I will be angry at all the people.

¹⁵When those things happen, your enemies will be outside the city with their swords, and there will be plagues and famines inside the city. Those who are caught outside of the city in the fields will be killed by their enemies' swords, and those who are in the city will die from famines and plagues. ¹⁶Those who survive and escape will flee to the mountains, and they all will moan because of their sins, as pigeons moan. ¹⁷Because they will be very afraid, all the people's hands will become limp and weak, and their knees will become very weak and unable to hold them up. ¹⁸They will put on clothes made from rough cloth, and they will be terrified. Their faces will show that they are ashamed, and they will shave their heads to show that they are very sad. ¹⁹They will throw their silver into the streets, and consider their gold the same way they would consider garbage, because they will realize that their silver and gold will not be able to rescue them when Yahweh punishes them. They will not be able to buy food to fill their stomachs, because having a lot of gold and silver has led them to sin. ²⁰They were proud, so they used their beautiful jewelry to make detestable and disgusting idols of their false gods. So I will make them see how disgusting and unacceptable these things are. ²¹I will give their silver and gold to foreigners who invade your country and take away your valuable treasures. I will give those things to wicked people, and I will not interfere when they will do disgraceful things to the things that they take. ²²I will allow robbers to enter the temple I love and protect, and they will desecrate it.

²³Prepare chains to be fastened on you when your enemies capture you as punishment because the people throughout the country are committing murder, and people in the city are being violent. ²⁴So I will bring armies of the nations whose people are extremely wicked to take the houses of the Israelite people. I will make Israelite people realize that they are to no longer be proud. Your enemies will cause your places of worship to no longer be acceptable to be used. ²⁵When your enemies cause you to be terrified, you will plead for them to make peace, but there will be no peace. ²⁶You will experience many disasters, and you will continually hear rumors about disasters that are happening in other places. People will plead with prophets to tell them what visions they have received, but the prophets will not have received any visions. Priests will no longer teach people the laws that I gave to Moses. Even the wise older people will not have any answers. ²⁷Your king will mourn, and his son will no longer expect that good things will happen. The hands of people throughout the country will tremble. And I will do to them what they deserve for their wicked behavior. I will judge and condemn them the same way they have judged and condemned others. Then they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

Chapter 8

¹On the fifth day of the sixth month, almost six years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, I was sitting with the leaders of Judah in my house when I felt the presence of Yahweh the Lord come on me again. ²Then in a vision I saw someone who resembled a man, but below his waist his body was like fire and above his waist his body was glowing like very hot metal. ³He reached out what seemed to be a hand and grabbed me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up high above the earth, and in visions God took me from Babylon to Jerusalem. He took me to the temple, to the inner north gate, to the place where there was an idol that caused Yahweh to be very disgusted and furious. ⁴And there in front of me was the very bright light of God himself whom the Israelite people previously worshiped. It was like the vision that I had seen in the plain.

⁵God said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north!" So I looked, and I saw at the entrance of the gate near the altar that idol that caused Yahweh to be disgusted and furious.

⁶He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what the Israelite people are doing? They are doing detestable things here, things that will cause me to abandon my temple. But you will see things that are even more detestable."

⁷Then he brought me to the entrance of the courtyard. I looked and saw a hole in the wall. ⁸He said to me, "Son of man, dig through the wall here." So I dug through the wall, and I saw a doorway inside.

⁹He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things that they are doing here!" ¹⁰So I went in through the doorway and looked, and I saw all over the walls of a big room, drawings of all kinds of creatures that crawl along the ground and other detestable animals, and drawings of all the idols that the people of Israel were worshiping. ¹¹In front of them stood seventy elders of Israel. Jaazaniah son of Shaphan, was standing among them. Each of them was holding a pan in which incense was burning, and fragrant smoke of burning incense was rising up.

¹²God said to me, "Son of man, look at what the Israelite elders are doing here in the darkness, each of them standing in his rooms with the carved images, worshiping his own idols! They are saying, 'Yahweh does not see us; Yahweh has deserted this country.'" ¹³He also said, "But you will see things that are even more detestable!"

¹⁴Then he took me to the entrance at the outer north gate of the temple. I saw women sitting there, mourning for the death of the god of the people of Babylonia, Tammuz. ¹⁵He said to me, "Son of man, do you see this? And you will see things that are more detestable than this!"

¹⁶Then he took me into the inner courtyard inside the temple. There at the entrance of the temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men. Their backs were toward the temple, and their faces were toward the east; they were bowing down to worship the sun as it rose in the east.

¹⁷He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing? Do you think that it is not a serious thing that these men of Judah are doing, worshiping these detestable things here? But they are doing other terrible things. They are acting violently throughout their country, and continually provoking my anger. Look at them! They are insulting me by their actions of false worship! ¹⁸So I will show them that I am very angry. I will not pity them or act mercifully toward them. And even if they shout loudly to me to help them, I will not pay attention to them."

Chapter 9

¹Then I heard Yahweh call out loudly, "You men who are going to punish this city, bring your tools of destruction here." ²Then I saw six men coming from the north gate of the temple. Each one was carrying a weapon. With them was a man wearing a white linen robe. He carried at his side a case containing things to write with. They all came in and stood beside the bronze altar.

³Then the glory that symbolized the presence of the God of Israel rose up from above the four winged creatures and moved to the entrance of the temple, and Yahweh called to the man wearing the linen robe, ⁴and said to him, "Go throughout Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who are very sad because of the detestable things that are being done inside the city."

⁵While I was listening, he said to the other six men, "Follow the man wearing the white robe, and kill people. Do not pity them or act mercifully toward them. ⁶Slaughter old men, young men and women, older women and children; but do not harm any of those who have that mark on their forehead. Start at my temple." So they began by killing the elders who were worshiping idols in front of the temple.

⁷Then Yahweh said to those men, "Pollute the temple by filling the courtyard with the corpses of those whom you kill! Start now!" So they went out and started killing people throughout the city. ⁸While they were doing that, I was

left alone. I prostrated myself on the ground and cried out, "Yahweh my Lord, are you going to get rid of all the other people of Israel who are still alive, while you are severely punishing the people of Jerusalem?"

⁹He replied, "The sins of the people are numerous and severe! There is murder everywhere in this country, and this city is full of people who act unjustly. They say, 'Yahweh has abandoned this country, and he does not see what we are doing.' ¹⁰So I will not pity them or act mercifully toward them. I will do to them the evil things that they have done to other people."

¹¹Then the man wearing the linen robe returned, saying, "I have done what you commanded me to do."

Chapter 10

¹Then I saw what resembled a throne made of sapphire above the thing that resembled a dome that was above the heads of the four winged creatures. ²Yahweh said to the man wearing the linen robe, "Go between the wheels that are under the winged creatures. Pick up as many hot coals as you can, and scatter them over the city." And while I watched, the man wearing the white robe left.

³The four winged creatures were standing on the south side of the temple when the man wearing the white robe entered. Then a cloud filled the inner courtyard of the temple. ⁴And the glory of Yahweh went up from directly over the winged creatures and stood over the doorway of the temple. It filled the entire temple with a cloud and everything in the courtyard was bright because of Yahweh's glorious presence. ⁵I also heard the sound made by the wings of the winged creatures in the courtyard outside the temple. It was very loud, like the voice of Almighty God when he speaks.

⁶When Yahweh commanded the man wearing the linen robe to take burning coals from among those winged creatures, the man went into the courtyard and stood beside one of the wheels. ⁷Then one of those winged creatures reached out his hand to the fire that was there among them. He picked up some of the coals and put them in the hands of the man wearing the linen robe, and that man took them and left. ⁸Under the wings of the winged creatures was something that resembled a human's hands.

⁹Then I saw four wheels alongside the winged creatures. There was one wheel beside each of the winged creatures. The wheels shone like very valuable stones. ¹⁰The wheels were all alike: Each had one wheel inside another wheel. ¹¹Whenever they moved, they went straight in whatever direction one of the winged creatures faced. The wheels did not turn in another direction while the winged creatures flew. ¹²Their bodies, including their backs and hands and wings, were covered with eyes. The wheels were also covered with eyes. ¹³I heard someone call them 'the whirling wheels.' ¹⁴Each of the winged creatures had four faces. One face was like the face of a bull, one face was like the face of a human, one face was like the face of a lion, and one face was like the face of an eagle.

¹⁵Then the winged creatures rose up. They were the same living creatures that I had seen alongside the Kebar Canal. ¹⁶When the winged creatures moved, the wheels moved with them. When the winged creatures spread their wings to fly over the ground, the wheels did not leave them but stayed beside them. ¹⁷When the winged creatures stopped, the wheels stopped. When the winged creatures started to fly, the wheels flew with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

¹⁸Then the glory of Yahweh left the entrance of the temple and stopped above the winged creatures. ¹⁹While I watched, the winged creatures spread their wings and started to fly, and the wheels went with them. They stopped at the gate on the east side of the temple, and the glory of God, the one whom the Israelites had worshiped, was above them.

²⁰These were the same four living creatures that I had seen alongside the Kebar Canal, and I realized that they were the winged creatures. ²¹Each of them had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what

resembled a human's hands. ²²Their faces were the same as the faces that I had seen at the Kebar Canal. Each of them flew straight ahead.

Chapter 11

¹Then God's Spirit lifted me up and took me to the gate on the east side of the temple. There at the gate were twenty-five men. Among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, who were leaders of the people. ²Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, these are the new leaders in Jerusalem who are planning to do evil things and who are giving wicked advice to people in this city. ³They say, 'It is not the time to build houses yet, but just as pieces of meat are carefully stored in covered pots we will be protected from the bad things that will happen to others.' ⁴So, son of man, prophesy about the terrible things that will happen to them."

⁵Then the Spirit of Yahweh came upon me and told me to say to the people, "This is what Yahweh says, 'You Israelite people say those things, and I know what you are thinking. ⁶You have killed many people in this city and filled the streets with their corpses.

⁷Therefore this is what Yahweh the Lord says, 'The corpses of the people whom you have killed here are like the meat and Jerusalem is the cauldron, but I will expel you people from this city! ⁸You are afraid of being killed by enemies' swords, so that is what I will cause to happen to you. ⁹I will expel you from this city and enable foreigners to capture you and punish you. ¹⁰They will kill you with their swords; you will be punished right here in Israel! Then people will realize that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹¹This city will not be a place where you will be protected like meat in a covered pot. I will punish you wherever you are in Israel. ¹²Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have predicted that would happen, because you have not obeyed my commands and decrees; instead, you have imitated the wicked behavior of the people of the nearby nations."

¹³While I was prophesying that, Pelatiah son of Benaiah suddenly died. Then I prostrated myself on the ground and cried out loudly, "Yahweh my Lord, are you going to similarly get rid of all the Israelite people who are still alive?"

¹⁴Then Yahweh gave me this message, ¹⁵"Son of man, the people who are still in Jerusalem are talking about your relatives, your clan, and all the rest of the Israelites who were exiled and saying, 'They are in Babylonia, far from Yahweh. They have left their property here in Israel, so their property now belongs to us!'"

¹⁶So tell them, "This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Although I caused them to be taken far away from Israel and scattered them among other nations, for a short time I have become a sanctuary for them in the countries to which they have been taken."

¹⁷So also tell them, "This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Some day I will gather you from the nations to which you have been taken and bring you back to Israel, and you will live in your country again.

¹⁸When you return to your country, you will get rid of all the vile statues of gods and detestable idols. ¹⁹I will give you Israelites one new heart and I will give you a new way of thinking when you return to Israel. You will not be stubborn, but will be obedient. ²⁰When I do that, you will carefully obey all my laws. You will be my people, and I will be your God. ²¹But as for those who are devoted to worshiping their vile statues and detestable idols, I will punish them as they deserve for the evil things that they have done." This is what Yahweh declared.

²²Then the winged creatures, with their wheels beside them, spread their wings and flew up into the air, and the dazzling brightness of Yahweh was above them. ²³That light went up away from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east of the city. ²⁴In the vision that I had been seeing, God's Spirit lifted me up and brought me back to the exiles in Babylon. Then the vision ended, ²⁵and I told the exiles everything that Yahweh had shown me in the vision.

Chapter 12

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²“Son of man, you are living among people who are very rebellious. They have eyes, but they do not see what I want them to see; they have ears, but they do not listen to what I want them to hear, because they are such a rebellious people.

³Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings as though you were going into exile. Then, during the daytime, while people are watching, prepare to go to another place. Even though the people are rebellious, perhaps they will understand what you are symbolizing. ⁴During the daytime, while they are watching, bring out the things that you want to take, and pack them. Then in the evening, while they are watching, do what those who are preparing to go into exile do. ⁵Dig through the city wall and take your things through the hole. ⁶Put them in a sack on your shoulder while they are watching, and leave when it becomes dark. Cover your face so you cannot see the path. I want you to do this because I want you to warn the Israelite people.”

⁷So I did what Yahweh told me to do. During the day I brought things out of my house as though I was packing to go into exile. Then in the evening I dug through the city wall. Then while people watched, I put my sack of belongings on my shoulder and left.

⁸The next morning, Yahweh gave me this message, ⁹“Son of man, did the rebellious people of Israel not ask you, ‘What are you doing?’

¹⁰So go back and say to them, ‘What I did is about the king in Jerusalem and all the other people of Israel who are there.’ ¹¹Tell them, ‘What I did is a warning to you. What I did in front of you, they are going to have to do. They will be captured and forced to go to another country. ¹²Their king will put his belongings on his shoulder when it becomes dark and he will try to escape. His servants will dig a hole through the city wall, and he will take his belongings through it. He will cover his face so others will not recognize him and he will not be able to see the land. ¹³But it will be as though I will spread a net for him to be captured; enemy soldiers will capture him, blind him, and take him to the city of Babylon where the Chaldean people live. But he will not be able to see it because he will be blind; and there he will die. ¹⁴I will scatter all those who have been around him—his advisors and his soldiers—in every direction; and I will cause his enemies to pursue them, with their swords ready to strike them.

¹⁵Then, when I scatter them among many nations, they will know that I, Yahweh have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹⁶But I will spare some of them from being killed by the sword, or starving to death, or dying of disease so they can record that they have been doing disgusting things, and they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

¹⁷Then Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁸“Son of man, tremble while you eat your food, and shudder fearfully while you drink your water. ¹⁹Tell this to the Israelite people: ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says about those who are still living in Jerusalem and in other places in Israel. They also will be very anxious while they eat their food and drink their water, because their country will soon have everything taken away. That will happen because the people who live there continually act very violently. ²⁰The towns where people live will be devastated, and the land will become barren. Then you people will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

²¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²²“Son of man, the people in Israel have this proverb that says, ‘The days keep passing, and what the prophets predict never happens.’ ²³So say to them, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: I am going to prove that what they say is not correct, and then they will never say it again in Israel.’ Tell them, ‘It will soon be the time when everything that the prophets predict will happen.’ ²⁴No longer will prophets tell the Israelite people false visions, or tell people prophecies just to please them. ²⁵Instead, I, Yahweh, will say what I want to tell the people, and what I predict will quickly happen. You rebellious people, I will cause to happen everything that I say will happen. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say.”

²⁶Yahweh also gave me this message. He said, ²⁷"Son of man, the Israelite people are constantly saying about you, 'The things that he sees in visions will not happen soon. They are about things that will happen many years from now, far in the future.'

²⁸Therefore say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: I will no longer delay causing to happen any of the things that I have prophesied. Whatever I have predicted will soon happen.'"

Chapter 13

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, prophesy a warning against the prophets in Israel who are prophesying. Some of them are prophesying things that they themselves have imagined. Say to them, 'Listen to what Yahweh says! ³He says, "Terrible things will happen to those wicked prophets who proclaim their own ideas and have not seen any visions from me. ⁴You Israelite people, your prophets are like jackals in the desert, they are scavengers feeding off of others' loss. ⁵Because you were listening to them, you have not repaired breeches or strengthened your walls. That needs to be done so that the walls will be strong when I, Yahweh, send your enemies to attack you. ⁶The visions and prophecies of those prophets are false. They say, 'Yahweh told me this.' I have not sent them to you to be my prophets, but you expect that what they prophesy will truly happen! ⁷They say that they have seen visions, but those visions are false, and the things that they prophesy are lies. They say, 'Yahweh told me this,' but I have told them nothing!

⁸Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because you prophets have said what is false and because your visions are lies, I am opposed to you. ⁹I will strike all you prophets who falsely say that you have seen visions and prophesy things that are lies. You will not have any place among my people, your names will not be listed in the records of the Israelite people, and you will never return to Israel. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

¹⁰They deceive my people, saying "Things will go well for us" when things will not go well. It is like they want to make people think that there is a very strong wall when it is not strong. ¹¹So, tell those prophets who cover the wall with whitewash that the wall will surely fall down. It will rain very hard. I will send big hailstones to fall. Very strong winds will blow against it. ¹²When the wall falls down, the people will certainly say to those prophets, "The white paint certainly did not make the wall strong!"

¹³So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because I am very angry with you, I will send enemy armies to destroy Jerusalem. It will be as though I will send a very strong wind and hailstones and very heavy rains to destroy you.

¹⁴The false prophecies of your prophets are like a wall that they have covered with whitewash, but I will break it down, and shatter it down to the ground, with the result that people can see its foundations. When the wall collapses you also will be killed, and everyone will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹⁵In that way I will show that I am very angry with the wall and with those who covered it with whitewash. And I will say, "The wall is gone and those who whitewashed it have been killed." ¹⁶Those are the prophets who prophesied that things would go well for the people in Jerusalem, when things would not go well for them.'

¹⁷So you, son of man, show that you are angry with the women of Jerusalem who prophesy things that they themselves have imagined, and speak true prophesy against them. ¹⁸Tell them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Terrible things will happen to you women who fasten magic charms on your wrists and make veils of various sizes to put on your heads in order to deceive the people. You think that you will deceive others by telling them that you know what will happen in the future, and you will save your own lives. ¹⁹You dishonored me by telling lies in order to get from my people a few handfuls of barley and a few pieces of bread. My people listen to lies; and you women who are lying to them have caused people who did not deserve to die to be killed, and have spared those who should not continue to live.'

²⁰Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to those women: 'I detest your magic charms by which you deceive people like other people trap birds. I will tear those charms off your wrists, and I will cause the people whom you

have deceived to no longer be deceived by you. ²¹I will also tear off your veils and rescue my people from continuing to be deceived by you, and they will no longer be under your control. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ²²You have discouraged righteous people by telling them lies when I did not do things to cause them to be sad. And you have encouraged wicked people to keep on doing their wicked behavior; if they had turned away from it, they would have continued to live. ²³Therefore, you will no longer falsely say that you have seen visions or tell people what will happen in the future in order to please them. I will rescue my people from being deceived by you. And then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

Chapter 14

¹One day some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me. ²Then Yahweh gave me this message: ³“Son of man, these men worship idols, and they are allowing idols to induce them to sin. So should I answer them if they ask me for advice? ⁴But say this to them: ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: When any Israelite person wants to worship idols that will induce him to sin, and goes to a prophet to get advice, I, Yahweh, will give him the same answer that they deserve to receive because they worship idols. ⁵I will do this so the Israelite people, who have abandoned me in order to worship their idols, will sincerely worship me again.’

⁶Therefore, say to the Israelite people, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Repent! Stop worshiping your idols, and stop all your other detestable behavior!’

⁷When any of you Israelite people or any foreigner living among you turns away from me and starts worshiping idols that induce him to sin, and then goes to a prophet to find out what I want him to do, I myself will answer him.

⁸I will show that I detest him, and cause what happens to him to be a warning to others, and cause him to be someone whom people despise. I will not allow him to associate with my people. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁹And if a prophet is deceived and gives a false prophecy, even though I have allowed him to give that message, I will get rid of him and remove him from among my Israelite people. ¹⁰Both the prophet and the one who asks him for advice will be guilty, and I will punish both of them. ¹¹Then the Israelite people will no longer abandon me, and they will no longer become unacceptable to me because of their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say.”

¹²Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹³“You human, if the people of some country sin against me by abandoning me, and I punish them by cutting off their food supply and by sending a famine so that people and animals die, ¹⁴even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, they would save only themselves because of their being righteous. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

¹⁵Or, if I send wild animals throughout the country, and they attack and kill many of the people, so that travel in that country becomes very dangerous and no one travels through that country, ¹⁶as surely as I am alive, even if those three men were in that country, they could not save even their own sons or daughters from being killed. Only they three would be saved, and the country would become a wasteland. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

¹⁷Or, if I bring enemy soldiers to kill the people and animals throughout that country with their swords, ¹⁸as surely as I am alive, even if those three men were in that country, they would not be able to save even their own sons or daughters from being killed. They would save only themselves. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

¹⁹Or, if I send a plague into that land and cause the people and the animals to die from the plague because I am very angry with those people, ²⁰as surely as I am alive, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in that country, they would not be able to save even their sons and daughters. They would save only themselves because of their being righteous. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

²¹So now this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I will cause four things to happen to the people of Jerusalem to punish them very severely. Some people and animals will be killed by swords, some will die from famines, others will be attacked and killed by wild animals, and others will die in plagues. ²²But some of your people will remain alive, both adults and children. They will come to you, Ezekiel. And when you see their disgusting behavior and actions, you will realize that I had good reasons for causing the people of Jerusalem to experience those many great disasters that I have sent to them. ²³When you see those things that they do, you will know that there were very good reasons for me to do everything that I caused to happen to them. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare."

Chapter 15

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, the wood of a grapevine is certainly not more useful than the branches of the trees in a forest. ³No one even makes pegs from it to hang things on. ⁴And after a branch of a grapevine is thrown into a fire and the fire burns both ends and chars the branch in the middle, after that will it be useful for anything? ⁵No; if it was not useful for anything before it was burned, it certainly cannot be made into something useful after the fire has burned and charred it.

⁶Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: The wood of grapevines is useful only for fuel in a fire. Similarly, the people who live in Jerusalem are useless. ⁷I will reject them. It will be as though they have escaped from a fire, but there will still be a fire that will burn them up. And when I punish them, you people who remain alive will know that I, Yahweh, have done it. ⁸I will cause your country to become a wasteland because your people have not been loyal to me. That is what I, Yahweh, the Lord, say."

Chapter 16

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, inform the people of Jerusalem about their detestable behavior. ³Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you people of Jerusalem: It is as though you are a woman whose father belonged to the Amor people group and your mother belonged to the Heth people group. ⁴It is as though on the day that you were born, your umbilical cord was not cut, and your body was not washed in water or rubbed with salt and wrapped in strips of cloth, like Israelite babies always are. ⁵No one pitied you or acted kindly toward you by doing those things for you. Instead, it was as though they hated you. As soon as you were born they threw you into a field to die.

⁶Then it was as though I passed by and saw you lying in your own blood and kicking. And while you lay there kicking in your own blood, I said to you, "I want you to remain alive!" ⁷It was as though I caused you to grow up, like plants in the field grow; you grew up and became tall and became like the most precious jewel of all. You developed into a beautiful woman, but you were still completely naked.

⁸When I saw you several years later, it was as though I spread the cloth of my robe over you to symbolize that I would marry you, with the result that you were no longer naked. I solemnly promised that I would marry you and made a marriage agreement with you, and you became my wife.' That is what Yahweh the Lord says.

⁹And then it was as though I bathed you and washed the blood from you and put ointment on your body. ¹⁰It was as though I put a fine linen robe on you and gave you expensive clothes. I put an embroidered dress on you and put leather sandals on your feet. ¹¹It was as though I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck. Those things all had nice jewels fastened to them. ¹²I put a gold ring in your nose and fastened earrings to your ears and put a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³So it was as though you wore gold and silver ornaments. You had clothes made from fine linen and other expensive fabrics, and an embroidered dress. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil. You were the most beautiful woman and I made you into a queen. ¹⁴You were very beautiful, with the result that people in other nations heard about you, because they knew that I, Yahweh the Lord, am the one who had caused you to become very beautiful.

¹⁵But it was as though you forgot that I made you beautiful and started acting promiscuous with every man who came along, and they all enjoyed your beauty. ¹⁶It was as though you took some of your clothes to make beautifully decorated the high places, and that is where you slept with those men. Those things should certainly never occur! ¹⁷You took the fine gold and silver jewelry that I gave you, and you made male idols for yourself, in order to sleep with them. ¹⁸You took some of your embroidered clothes to put on those idols, and you burned oil and incense in front of them to honor them. ¹⁹And the bread that was made from fine flour and the olive oil and honey that I gave to you to eat, you offered to be a fragrant sacrifice to those idols. I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that that is what happened.

²⁰And you even took your sons and daughters who were supposed to be committed to me and sacrificed and killed them as though they were less important than your becoming a prostitute. ²¹You slaughtered those who were like my children, and offered them to be sacrifices to these false gods! ²²All during the time when you were acting like a prostitute and doing other detestable things, you did not think about the time when it was as though you were very young, naked, lying in your own blood and kicking in the field.

²³So I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that terrible things will happen to you. In addition to all the other wicked things that you did, ²⁴you built yourself a tall building in which you worship idols and you built a place to worship idols in every city square. ²⁵At the beginning of every street you built a tall building for the worship of idols, and showed people your beautiful body, offering it to sleep with every man who walked by, and so you were known as a prostitute and your fame for your immorality grew every day. ²⁶It was as though you had slept with men from Egypt who were eager to sleep with you, men who lived near Israel. You caused me to become very angry because you became more eager to sleep with more and more of them. ²⁷So I punished you and caused your enemies to capture some of your country. I enabled your greedy enemies from Philistia to defeat you; and even they were shocked because of your disgraceful behavior. ²⁸It was as though you slept with soldiers from Assyria, too, because you always wanted to sleep with more men. And after that, you still were not satisfied. ²⁹So you also slept with soldiers from Babylonia, a country full of merchants, but even that did not satisfy you.

³⁰I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that you are ruining your life! When you did all those things, you were acting like a prostitute who has no shame for all the things she does. ³¹But when you built the houses on the hills to worship idols in every city square, you were not really like a prostitute because prostitutes charge money. You refused to take money for what you did!

³²You are like a woman who commits adultery: You prefer to sleep with strangers rather than with your husband.

³³Prostitutes are paid, but it is as though you give gifts to all your lovers; you bribe them to come to you from everywhere to sleep with you. ³⁴So although you act like you are a prostitute, you are actually the opposite of other prostitutes! Instead of them giving any money to you, you give men money to sleep with you!

³⁵Therefore, you people of Jerusalem, you, who are like a prostitute, listen to what Yahweh the Lord is saying about you! ³⁶He says that what you have done is as though you have lusted for everyone around you and had slept with them and with the male idols you made, so that you even made your own children to be sacrifices to them. ³⁷So what I am going to do is as though I will gather those who you think have loved you and those whom you hated. I will gather them around you to attack you, and what I will do is as though I will strip your clothes off you, and they will see you when you are completely naked. ³⁸I will punish you like women who commit adultery and who murder people are punished. I will get revenge on you and get rid of you because I am extremely angry with you. ³⁹I will allow your enemies who you thought loved you break apart your high places of idol worship and pagan altars. They will strip you naked and keep your clothes and jewelry, and abandon you with nothing to cover yourself with.

⁴⁰They will bring a mob to attack you, and that mob will throw stones at you and cut you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹They will burn down your houses and punish you while many women are watching. I will let them do this so that you will learn a lesson for acting so adulterously and for paying people to sleep with you. ⁴²Then I will no longer be angry with you. I will stop being jealous because your punishment will satisfy me.

⁴³You have forgotten the wonderful things that I did for you in previous years. You have caused me to become extremely angry because of all the evil things that you have done. In addition to all the other detestable things that you did, you committed many sexual sins. So I Yahweh the Lord declare that I will punish you for doing those things.

⁴⁴People who like to quote proverbs will quote this proverb about you: 'Daughters behave like their mothers behave.' ⁴⁵You are like your mother; it was as though she detested her husband and her children. You are like your sisters, who also despised their husbands and their children. It was as though your father belonged to the Amor people group and your mother belonged to the Heth people group. ⁴⁶And it was as though your older sister was Samaria, and she and her daughters lived to the north of you, and it was as though your younger sister was Sodom, and her daughters lived to the south of you. ⁴⁷You not only imitated all their detestable behavior, but you quickly became more sinful than they were. ⁴⁸I, Yahweh the Lord, solemnly declare that as surely as I am alive, the people who lived in Sodom and other nearby cities never did the detestable things that you people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah have done.

⁴⁹These are the sins of the people who lived in Sodom, who were like your sister people among them: they were prideful and did not think they would ever be punished. They ignored poor and hurting people around them. ⁵⁰The people of Sodom and nearby cities were proud and did detestable things in my presence, so I got rid of them when I saw what they had been doing. ⁵¹Also, the people of Samaria did not commit half as many sins as you commit. You have done more disgusting things than they have done. You cause the people of Samaria to appear to be good, compared to you. ⁵²Your sins are worse than their sins, so they seem to be less wicked than you are. So I will punish you more than I punished them. As a result, you will be ashamed and disgraced.

⁵³However, some day I will cause the people of Sodom and Samaria and the cities near to them to prosper again. And I will cause you to prosper again, too. ⁵⁴You will be very ashamed of the wicked things that you have done, and that will cause the people of those cities to be encouraged. ⁵⁵The people of Sodom and Samaria will prosper again, and you and the people in nearby cities will prosper also. ⁵⁶You sneered at the people of Sodom when you were proud, ⁵⁷before it was revealed that you were more wicked than she was. And now the people of Edom and the people of Philistia all insult you and despise you. ⁵⁸And you are being punished for all your immoral behavior and other detestable things that you do. This is what Yahweh is saying to you!

⁵⁹This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I will continue to punish you like you deserve to be punished, because by rejecting the agreement that I made with you, you have despised that solemn agreement that you promised to obey. ⁶⁰But I will not forget the agreement that I made with you long ago and I will make an agreement with you that will endure forever. ⁶¹Then you will think about what you have done, and you will be ashamed about those things when you welcome the people of Sodom and Samaria, cities which are like your daughters, but they will not have the same agreement that I will make with you. ⁶²I will establish my agreement with you, and you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ⁶³Then when I have forgiven you for all your sins, you will think about all the sins that you committed and you will be ashamed. You will never again boast about them, because you will be humiliated." I, the Lord Yahweh, have said so! This is the Lord Yahweh's declaration."

Chapter 17

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, tell this story as an illustration to the people of Israel. ³Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: A huge eagle that had strong wings and long beautiful feathers of many colors flew to Lebanon. It grasped the top of a cedar tree ⁴and broke it off. Then the eagle carried it away to Canaan, a country that had many merchants, and planted it in one of the cities there.

⁵Then that eagle took a seedling from your country and planted it in a fertile field. He planted it like people plant a willow tree, alongside a stream that had plenty of water. ⁶It grew and became a low grapevine that spread along the ground. Its branches turned up toward the eagle, but its roots grew down into the ground. So it became a good vine and produced lots of branches and leaves.

⁷But there was another huge eagle that had strong wings and beautiful feathers. And some of the roots of the vine grew toward that eagle, and its branches also turned toward it, hoping that the eagle would bring more water to it.

⁸That happened in spite of the fact that the vine had been planted in good soil, where there was plenty of water, with the result that it had produced branches and produced grapes and had become a very healthy vine.'

⁹Then after you have told that to the people, say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: That vine will certainly not remain healthy. It will be pulled up by its roots by the eagle that planted it, and all its fruit will be stripped off and its leaves will wither. And it will not need someone with strong arms or many people to pull it out by its roots. ¹⁰Even if that vine is transplanted, it certainly will not continue to grow. When the hot wind from the east blows against it, it will completely wither, there where it was planted!'"

¹¹Then Yahweh gave this message to me: ¹²"Ask these rebellious Israelite people, 'Do you know what this parable means?' Tell them that it signifies that the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem with his army and captured the king of Judah and his officials, and took them back to Babylon. ¹³Then he took one of the king's close relatives, appointed one of them as king, and made an agreement with him, forcing him to solemnly promise to remain loyal. The king of Babylon also took to Babylon the other important citizens of Judah, ¹⁴in order that the kingdom of Judah would not be able to become powerful again. The king of Babylon intended that the kingdom of Judah would not continue to exist if the people did not obey that agreement that he made with the king of Babylon. ¹⁵The king of Judah rebelled against the king of Babylon by sending officials to Egypt to request from them horses and a large army to fight against the army of Babylonia. But the king of Judah will certainly not be successful. Rulers who rebel like that and refuse to obey solemn agreements will never escape.

¹⁶I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, the king of Judah will die in Babylon, in the city where the king of Babylon appointed him to be the king of Judah. He will die because he despised the solemn agreement and refused to do what he promised to do. ¹⁷The king of Egypt with all his very huge army will not be able to help the king of Judah: The soldiers from Babylonia will build ramps up against the city walls and set up devices to batter the walls. They will enter Jerusalem and kill many of its people. ¹⁸The king of Judah despised the solemn agreement by disregarding the treaty. Although he had solemnly promised to be under the control of the king of Babylon, he sent officials to request help from Egypt. Therefore he will not escape being punished by the king of Babylon.

¹⁹Therefore this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Just as surely as I am alive, I will cause the king of Judah to be punished for ignoring the solemn agreement that he made with the king of Babylon and then refusing to obey it, since this violates what I expect. ²⁰It will be as though I will spread a net to capture him, and he will be caught in it. He will be captured and taken to Babylon and punished because he rebelled against me. ²¹Most of his soldiers who try to escape will be killed by their enemies' swords, and those who survive will be scattered in all directions. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

²²This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: "It will be as though I will take a shoot from the top of a very tall cedar tree and plant it in another place. I will plant it on a very high mountain. ²³It will be as though I will plant it on a mountain in Israel, and it will grow and become a beautiful cedar tree. Many kinds of birds will make their nests in the tree, and they will have shade in its branches. ²⁴And it will be as though all the trees in the field will know that I, Yahweh, get rid of tall trees and will make little ones grow. I cause big green trees to wither, and I cause dry trees to become green.

I, Yahweh have said this, and I will certainly do what I have said that I will do."

Chapter 18

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"You people quote this proverb and say that it is about Israel:

'Parents eat sour grapes,

but it is their children who have a very sour taste in their mouths.'

This means that you think that you must suffer for the sins that your ancestors committed.

³But I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, you Israelite people will no longer say this proverb.

⁴Everyone who is alive belongs to me. That includes children and their parents; they all belong to me. And it is those who sin who will die because of their sins.

⁵So suppose that there is a righteous person,

one who always does what is fair and right.

⁶He does not eat meat sacrificed to idols on the hilltops;

he does not request help from idols as the rest of Israel has been doing.

He does not sleep with someone else's wife

or with a woman during her monthly menstrual period.

⁷He does not mistreat people;

if a person borrows money from him and gives him something to guarantee that he will pay the money back, this man always gives it back to that person before the sun goes down.

He does not rob people.

He gives food to hungry people.

He gives clothing to people who need clothes.

⁸When he lends money to people,

he does not do it to make him pay interest.

He does not do things that are evil.

He always decides things fairly.

⁹He faithfully obeys all my laws.

That man is truly righteous;

he will remain alive.

That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, promise.

¹⁰But suppose that man has a son who acts violently, who murders people and does any of these other things, even though his father has not done any of them.

¹¹He eats meat sacrificed to idols on the hilltops.

He sleeps with other people's wives.

¹²He mistreats poor and needy people.

He robs people.

If someone gives him something to guarantee that he will pay back money that he has borrowed, the unrighteous man never gives it back to him before the sun goes down.

He seeks help from idols.

He does other disgusting things.

¹³When he lends money, he charges interest.

If you think that I will keep such a person alive, you are certainly wrong. Because he has done all those detestable things, I will certainly make him die, and it will be his own fault.

¹⁴But suppose that man has a son who sees all the sins that his father commits, but he himself does not do those things.

¹⁵The son does not eat meat sacrificed to idols on the hilltops.

He does not request help from idols.

He does not sleep with other people's wives.

¹⁶He does not mistreat people.

If he lends money to someone, he does not require that person to give him something to guarantee that he will pay the money back.

He does not rob anyone.

He gives food to those who need it.

He gives clothes to those who need clothes.

¹⁷He does not commit sins, unlike his father,

and does not charge interest when he lends money.

He faithfully obeys all my laws.

I will make sure that that person does not die for his father's sins; he will certainly stay alive. ¹⁸But I will ensure that his father will die for the sins that he committed, because the father cheated and robbed people, and did other things that are evil.

¹⁹If you ask, 'Why should the man's son not suffer for the evil things that his father did?', I will answer that the son has done what is fair and right and has obeyed all my laws, so he will surely remain alive. ²⁰It is those who sin who will die because of their sins. I will not punish people because their parents have sinned, or because their children have sinned. I will reward people who live rightly, and I will punish the wicked people, those who live wrongly.

²¹But if a wicked person stops doing all the evil things that he did previously, and if he starts to obey faithfully all my laws, and if he does what is fair and right, he will surely remain alive; I will not kill him. ²²I will not punish him for the sins he committed previously. Because of the good things that he has done since that time, I will allow him to stay alive. ²³I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that I certainly am not happy about wicked people dying. Instead, I am happy when they stop doing wicked things and remain alive as a result.

²⁴But if a righteous person stops doing right things and starts to commit sins and does the same disgusting things that wicked people do, I will certainly not allow him to remain alive. I will not think about the righteous things that he did previously. Because he did not faithfully do what pleases me, and because of all the sins that he has committed, he will certainly die.

²⁵But you say that I, Yahweh, do not act fairly. You Israelite people, listen to what I say: It is certainly not what I do that is unfair; it is what you continually do that is not fair. ²⁶If a righteous person turns away from doing what is right and commits sins, he will die for committing those sins. ²⁷But if a wicked person turns away from doing wicked things and does what is just and right, he will save himself from dying. ²⁸Because he has thought about all the evil things that he did and has turned away from doing them, I will certainly allow him to live. I will not kill him.

²⁹But you, the Israelites, say that I do not act fairly. You people of Israel, I always act fairly. It is you who are acting wickedly.

³⁰Therefore, you Israelite people, I, Yahweh the Lord, will judge each of you according to what you have done. Repent! Turn away from all your wicked behavior! Then I will not destroy you because of the wrong things you have done. ³¹Stop doing wicked things; start thinking in a new way. You Israelite people, do you really want me to kill you because you have sinned? ³²I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that I am not pleased if you die. So turn away from your sins and stay alive!"

Chapter 19

¹Yahweh said to me, ²"Ezekiel, sing a sad funeral song which will be a parable about the leaders of Israel. Say to the Israelite people,

'It is as though your mother had been a brave female lion
who raised her cubs among other lions.

³She taught one of them to hunt for other animals to kill,
and he even learned to kill and eat people.

⁴When people from other nations heard about him,
they trapped him in a pit.

Then they used hooks
to drag him to Egypt.

⁵His mother waited for him to return,
but soon she stopped hoping for that to happen.
So she raised another cub
who also became very fierce.

⁶He hunted along with other lions for animals to kill,
and he even learned to kill and eat people.

⁷He mistreated his victims' widows,
and he destroyed cities.
When he roared loudly,
everyone was terrified and abandoned everything they owned.

⁸So people of other nations planned to kill him;
and men came from many places
to spread out a net for him.
They caught him in it.

⁹They pulled him with hooks in his flesh and put him into an iron cage,

then they took him to the king of Babylon.

There they locked him up so that the sound of his voice
could never be heard echoing on the hills of Israel.'

¹⁰It is as though your mother

were a grapevine fertilized in blood,
and growing up beside a stream.

There was plenty of water,

so it had lots of branches and produced a lot of grapes.

¹¹That grapevine grew and became taller than all the nearby trees;

everyone could see that it was very strong and healthy.

And those branches were good for making scepters that symbolize the power of a king.

¹²But Yahweh became very angry,

so he pulled up the vine by its roots

and threw it on the ground,

where the very hot winds from the desert dried up all its fruit.

The strong branches wilted and were burned in a fire.

¹³Now Yahweh has planted that vine in a hot, dry desert.

¹⁴A fire started to burn its stem,

and then started to burn the branches;

it burned all the grapes.

Now not even one strong branch remains;

they will never become scepters for a king.'

This funeral song must be sung very sadly."

Chapter 20

¹Almost seven years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the tenth day of the fifth month of that year, some Israelite elders came to me to ask if I had any message for them from Yahweh.

²Then Yahweh gave me a message for them. He said, ³"Son of man, speak to the elders and tell them that the Lord Yahweh says this: 'You say that you have come to ask if there is any message from me, but as surely as I am alive, I will not allow you to ask for any message from me.'

⁴If you are willing to warn them, remind them of the disgusting things that their ancestors did. ⁵Then say to them, 'On the day that I chose you Israelite people to belong to me, I made a solemn oath to your ancestors while they were still in Egypt.' I said to them, 'I am Yahweh, your God. ⁶I will bring you out of Egypt and lead you to a land that I have chosen for you. It is the most fertile and beautiful land in the world. ⁷Each of you must get rid of the

disgusting idols that you love, and the idols which you learned to worship in Egypt, and with which you made it impossible for me to accept you. I, Yahweh your God, am saying this to you.'

⁸But they rebelled against me. They would not pay attention to me. They did not get rid of the disgusting idols they loved; they did not reject the idols that they saw in Egypt. So because I was angry with them, I said that I would punish them in Egypt. ⁹But for the sake of my own reputation, I decided to do something for your people so that the other people groups would not laugh at me and say I had no power. I decided that they would see me bring my people out of Egypt. ¹⁰Therefore I led your people out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. ¹¹I gave them all my laws and decrees, in order that they would obey them, and as a result they would live for a long time. ¹²Also, I established the Sabbath days to be a reminder between me and them, so they would know that I am Yahweh, the one who sets them apart for my honor.

¹³But the Israelite people rebelled against me in the wilderness also. They did not obey my commands; they rejected them, even though they would have lived a long time if they had obeyed them, and they treated the Sabbath days like any other day. So I said that I would destroy them in the wilderness, because that would show that I was very angry with them. ¹⁴But again, so that the other people groups would not laugh at me, I decided to do something in order to show those people groups that I was still as powerful as when they had seen me bring my people out of Egypt. ¹⁵I solemnly swore to your people in the wilderness that I would not take them into the land that I had promised to give them, a land that was the most fertile and beautiful land in the world. ¹⁶I made this oath, because they had rejected and disobeyed all my laws, and because they were treating the Sabbath days like any other day. And they insisted on worshipping their idols. ¹⁷But I still pitied them, so I did not destroy them in the wilderness. ¹⁸I said to their children, the next generation, 'Do not do the things that your parents always do. Do not worship their idols and so make it impossible for me to accept you. ¹⁹I am Yahweh your God. Carefully obey my laws and commands. ²⁰Respect my Sabbath days, in order that by doing that, it will remind you that you belong to me.

²¹But their children also rebelled against me. They did not take care to obey my laws, even though anyone who obeys them will live for a long time; and they also treated the Sabbath days like any other day. So again I said that I would kill them all in the wilderness, and in this way I would stop being angry. ²²But I did not do that. I decided once more to do something so that the other people groups, those that had seen me bring your people out of Egypt, would not laugh and say that I had lost my power. ²³So I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among many people groups, ²⁴because they had rejected and disobeyed all my laws, and because they were treating the Sabbath days like any other day—and because they were eager to worship the idols that their parents had worshiped. ²⁵So I also allowed them to obey laws that were not good, laws that would not help them live a long time. ²⁶I allowed them to do things that made it impossible for me to accept them: I allowed them to sacrifice their firstborn children in fire. I allowed them to do that in order that they would be horrified at themselves, and in order that they would know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

²⁷Therefore, son of man, speak to the Israelite people. Say this to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you: This is one way that your ancestors dishonored me by turning away from me.' ²⁸After I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them, every time that they saw a high hill or a big green tree, they offered sacrifices to idols there. They made offerings to them, and that caused me to become angry. They presented to those idols their fragrant incense, and they poured out wine offerings to them. ²⁹Then I asked them, 'What is this hilltop place where you go to worship idols?' So they are still called Bamah, which means 'hilltop.'

³⁰Therefore, say this to the Israelite people: 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Why do you imitate your ancestors in acting in ways that make me unable to accept you? You act like prostitutes, leaving their husbands for other men. In the same way, you have left me to worship disgusting idols. ³¹When you sacrifice your children in the fire, you make me unable to accept you. It is the same as when you bow down to your idols. You Israelite people, should I allow you to ask me to direct you in any matter? I, Yahweh the Lord, say that as surely as I am alive, I will not answer if you ask me.'

³²You say, 'We want to be like the other people groups in the world. We want to worship idols made of wood and stone like they do.' But what you want will never happen.' ³³I, Yahweh your Lord, say that as surely as I am alive, I will use my great power to rule over you, and to show that I am angry with you. ³⁴With my great power I will gather you from the places to which I scattered you. ³⁵I will bring you to a wilderness that is surrounded by other nations. There, while I am looking at you, I will judge you. ³⁶I will punish you, as I punished your ancestors in the wilderness near Egypt. ³⁷I will make you submit to me; I will force you to obey the covenant that I made with you. ³⁸I will destroy the people among you who rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of Babylonia, where they are now living, they will not enter Israel. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

³⁹As for you Israelite people, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Go and worship your idols now, each of you. But afterwards, you will surely pay attention to me and no longer dishonor me by taking gifts to your idols. ⁴⁰I, Yahweh your Lord, declare that there on my sacred hill, Zion, that high hill in Israel, you will bring gifts to me, and I will accept them. I will require you to bring to me gifts and offerings there, and your sacrifices that you will set apart for me. ⁴¹When I bring you out from the other nations to which you have been scattered, I will accept you as though you were fragrant incense. I will show the people of other nations that I have set myself apart as holy, that I might be honored. ⁴²Then, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land that I swore to give to your ancestors, you will know that I, Yahweh, have done it. ⁴³And there in Israel you will remember how you conducted your lives previously, the actions that caused you to become unacceptable to me, and you will hate yourselves for all the evil things that you have done. ⁴⁴When I act toward you Israelite people to protect my reputation, and not because of your evil deeds and corrupt behavior, you Israelite people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. That is what Yahweh the Lord declares."

⁴⁵Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ⁴⁶"Son of man, turn toward the south. Preach about what will happen to that dry land, to the forest there. ⁴⁷Say to the forest in the southern wilderness of Israel: Listen to this message that Yahweh the Lord is saying about you: I am about to start a fire in your midst, and it will burn up all your trees, both the green trees and the withered trees. Nothing will extinguish the blazing flames. And the fire will scorch the faces of everyone who lives in that area, from the south to the north. ⁴⁸Everyone will see that it is I, Yahweh, who have lit this fire, and no one will be able to put it out."

⁴⁹Then I said, "Yahweh, my Lord, when I tell things like this to people, they do not believe me. They say about me, 'He is only telling parables.'"

Chapter 21

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, turn toward the south. Set yourself against them. Preach against the south and prophesy against the forest in the southern Judean wilderness. ³Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh says: I am opposed to you, and it will be as though I pull my sword from its sheath to kill both the righteous and the wicked people among you! ⁴So what I will do to you will be as though I pull my sword from its sheath and strike you. I will kill everyone, including righteous people and wicked people. I will get rid of everyone, from the south to the north. ⁵Then everyone will know that it is as though I, Yahweh, have struck people with my sword, and I will not put it back in its sheath again.'

⁶Therefore, Son of man, groan! Groan in front of the Israelite people very sadly and sorrowfully. ⁷And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' tell them that it is because of the news that they soon will hear. Everyone will be very fearful, and their hands will tremble uncontrollably, while their knees become as weak as water. A great disaster will soon occur. This is what Yahweh the Lord is promising."

⁸Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ⁹"Son of man, prophesy and say to them, 'This is what the Lord says:

I will sharpen my sword

and polish it.

¹⁰It will be sharp in order that I can slaughter many people with it;
I will polish it so that it will flash like lightning.

The people of Judah will not celebrate about their king's scepter,
because it will not resist the sword that is coming against it.

¹¹So I will polish the sword,
and the right person will then hold it in his hand.
Now it is sharp; now it shines,
ready for the killer to use!

¹²So, Son of man, cry and wail,
because I will use my sword to kill my people,
including the leaders of Israel.
That sword will kill them and all the others of my people;
my sword will kill them all,
so beat your chests to show that you are sad.

¹³I am about to test my people,
and what will happen if the scepter cannot resist?
That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say.

¹⁴So, Son of man, prophesy;
clap your hands to show that you are very sad about what is going to happen.
My sword will strike my people again and again;
it is a sword for slaughtering many people,
while I attack them from every side.

¹⁵In order that people will be very much afraid
and that many people will die,
I have placed soldiers at every city gate,
ready to slaughter people.
My sword will flash like lightning,
as the soldiers slaughter the people.

¹⁶I will tell my sword to slash to the right
and then to the left,
and to turn in every direction until no one remains alive.

¹⁷Then I will clap my hands triumphantly;

and then I will no longer be angry.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

¹⁸Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁹“Son of man, draw on a map two roads for the king of Babylonia to march on with his army. When they depart from their own country, they will come to a signpost where a single road divides into those two roads. ²⁰If they take one of those roads, they will attack the city of Rabbah, the capital of the Ammon people group. If they take the other road, they will come to Judah and Jerusalem, a city with walls around it. ²¹When the army of Babylon comes to where the road divides, the army will stop, while the king performs magic rituals to decide which road to go on. He will throw arrows; then he will consult his idols about which road to go on, and he will examine the liver of a sheep. ²²With his right hand he will pick up the arrow marked with the name of Jerusalem. He will then command his soldiers to go to Jerusalem. When they arrive there, they will set up rams to batter down the walls, and then the king will give the command for them to slaughter the people. They will shout the battlecry, and they will set up the rams against the city gates. They will build a dirt ramp against the walls around the city, and set walls against the city. ²³The people in Jerusalem who had promised to be loyal to the king of Babylonia will think that those magic rituals must be wrong. They will think that his army should not be attacking them. But he will remind them of the disloyalty of which they are guilty, and he will say that they have violated their agreement with him.

²⁴Therefore, tell the Israelite people that this is what Yahweh the Lord says: ‘You people have allowed everyone to see that you are openly rebelling against the king of Babylonia, and by doing that you have shown that everything that you do is sinful. Therefore he will capture you and take you to Babylonia.’

²⁵Also, say to the king of Judah, ‘You very wicked king of Israel, it is your time to die. It is the time for Yahweh to punish you.’ ²⁶And this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to you about your king in Jerusalem, ‘Take off the king’s turban and his crown, because now things will be different than they were before. I will give power to those who had none, and I will disgrace those who had power. ²⁷I will cause the Babylonians to destroy everything. No one will be king of Judah again, not until the man comes who deserves to be king. Then I will make him become king.’

²⁸And, Son of man, prophesy and say that this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say about the Ammon people group, and about how I will disgrace them:

‘My soldiers have swords

and they have pulled out those swords to slaughter many people.

They have polished them in order to kill people,

and to flash like lightning.

²⁹Your Ammonite prophets have given you false visions about what will happen to you,

and they have held useless ceremonies that give you false messages.

So swords will strike the necks of those wicked people.

The day when I punish them has come,

because they have not been loyal to me.’

³⁰But later the soldiers of Babylon will have to put their swords back into their sheaths,

because the time for them to slaughter their enemies will end.

I will judge these Babylonians in the country where they were born.

³¹I will pour out my punishment on them.

Because I am very angry with them,
my breath on them will scorch them like a fire.

I will allow brutal men to capture them,
men who are experts at killing people.

³²They will be like fuel that is burned in a fire.

Their blood will flow in their own land.

No one will remember them anymore.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 22

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, are you ready to condemn the people of Jerusalem? It is a city full of murderers. Remind them of all the detestable things that they have done. ³Then say, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: By murdering people and by defiling yourselves, by making idols, you people of this city have brought on yourselves the time when I will destroy you. ⁴You have become guilty by murdering innocent people. You have made it impossible for me to accept you, by making idols for yourselves. You are bringing your time to an end. Therefore I will cause the other people groups to laugh at you and mock you. ⁵People in countries that are near you and people who live far from you will make fun of you, because your city is full of confusion, and because you have made it impossible for me, your own God, to accept you.

⁶Think about how each of your Israelite kings have used his power to murder people. ⁷Your people do not respect their parents; they have oppressed foreigners; they mistreat orphans and widows. ⁸You despise my sacred places and practices, and you treat the Sabbath days like any other day. ⁹Among you are men who tell lies in order to cause others to be executed. There are those who go to the hilltops and eat food offered to idols, and they openly perform evil acts. ¹⁰There are men who sleep with their father's wife, and men who sleep with women during their monthly menstrual periods. ¹¹There are men who sleep with someone else's wife. Some of your men sleep with their daughters-in-law or with their own sisters or half-sisters. ¹²There are among you men who accept bribes in order to cause someone to be executed. You charge interest when you lend people money. You become rich by forcing people to give you money. And you have forgotten me, Yahweh.

¹³So I will shake my fist at your unfair profits and at the murderers who live among you. ¹⁴When I finish punishing you, you will no longer be courageous. I, Yahweh, have said what I will do to you, and I will do it. ¹⁵I will scatter you among many people groups, and I will make you stop your sinful behavior. ¹⁶When the people of other nations see that you have been humiliated, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

¹⁷Yahweh then said to me, ¹⁸"Son of man, your Israelite people have become useless to me. They are like dross to me. They are like the useless copper, tin, iron, and lead that remains after silver is melted in a very hot furnace ¹⁹Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because you have all become like dross, I will gather you in Jerusalem. ²⁰People put ore containing silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin in a very hot furnace and melt them in a blazing fire to burn up the impurities. Similarly, I will gather you together inside Jerusalem, and because I am very angry with you, what I will do will be as though I am melting you. ²¹It will be as though I am blowing on you with a hot breath that shows that I am very angry, and it will be as though you will melt, ²²as though you will melt like silver melts in a furnace, and then you will know that I, Yahweh, have punished you."

²³Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²⁴“Son of man, say to the Israelite people, ‘You are disgusting to Yahweh, completely unacceptable to him. So Yahweh is angry with you. There will be no rain in your country.’

²⁵Their leaders are like lions that tear apart the animals that they have killed. The leaders destroy their people. They steal treasures and other valuable things from people, and they murder many men and make their wives into widows. ²⁶Their priests disobey my laws and dishonor my sacred things by saying that there is no difference between things that are sacred and those that are not sacred, and by ignoring my laws about resting on the Sabbath days. As a result, they no longer honor me. ²⁷Their officials are like wolves that tear apart the animals that they have killed. They murder people in order to get their money. ²⁸Their prophets try to cover up those sins by saying they have received visions from God. They say, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says,’ when I have said nothing to them. ²⁹The Israelite people force others to give them money, and they rob people. They oppress poor people, and they mistreat foreigners among them by not treating them fairly in the courts.

³⁰I looked among them to find a man who would pray for the people and cause them to repent so that I would not need to destroy them. But I did not find anyone. ³¹So because I am very angry with them, I will severely punish them for all the wicked things that they have done. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it.”

Chapter 23

¹Yahweh said to me, ²“Son of man, listen to this parable about Jerusalem and Samaria. Once there were two women, daughters of the same mother. ³They lived in Egypt. And from the time that they were young women, they became prostitutes. In that land, men fondled their breasts and caressed their young bosoms. ⁴The older sister was Oholah, and her younger sister was Oholibah. It was as though they later became my wives. Later they gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah represents Samaria, and Oholibah represents Jerusalem.

⁵Oholah acted like a prostitute while she was still my wife. She desired to sleep with those whom she loved—soldiers from Assyria. ⁶Some of them were army officers and commanders. They wore beautiful purple uniforms. They were all handsome young men who rode horses. ⁷She acted like a prostitute toward all the important Assyrian officials. I could no longer accept her as belonging to me, because she was worshiping all the idols of the men she wanted to sleep with. ⁸When she was a young woman in Egypt, she started being a prostitute, and she allowed young men to caress her breasts and have sex with her. When she became older, she did not quit acting like a prostitute.

⁹So I allowed the Assyrian soldiers, whom she wanted to sleep with, to capture her. ¹⁰They stripped all her clothes off her. They took away her sons and daughters. And then they killed her with a sword. Other women started talking about how she was disgraced, and about how she deserved to suffer.

¹¹Her younger sister Oholibah saw those things that happened to Oholah, but she was also a prostitute, and she desired to sleep with men even more than her older sister had desired. ¹²Oholibah also wanted to sleep with the Assyrian soldiers. Some of them were army officers and commanders. They all wore beautiful uniforms. They were all handsome young men. And they rode horses. ¹³I saw what she did that caused me to be unable to accept her, just like her older sister.

¹⁴But she did even worse things. She saw drawings of men from Babylonia on the walls, painted in red. ¹⁵The men in the drawings had belts around their waists and long turbans on their heads. They all resembled officers from Babylonia who rode in chariots. ¹⁶As soon as she saw those drawings, she wanted to sleep with those men, and she sent messages to them in Babylonia. ¹⁷Then the soldiers from Babylonia came to her, lay in bed with her, and slept with her. Then she became disgusted with them and turned away from them. ¹⁸But when she continued to openly act like a prostitute and to show herself naked to others, I became disgusted with her and rejected her, as I had rejected her older sister. ¹⁹But she became even more immoral, as she remembered when she was a young woman learning to be a prostitute in Egypt. ²⁰There she wanted to sleep with those who loved her, whose private parts were very long, like those of donkeys, and whose reproductive emissions were huge, like those of horses.

²¹So she desired to be immoral like she was when she was young, when men in Egypt caressed her bosom and fondled her young breasts.

²²Oholibah represents you people of Jerusalem. Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord say: Those soldiers who loved you but from whom you turned away because you became disgusted with them—I will make them angry with you. I will make them come and attack you from every side—²³soldiers from Babylon and all the other places in Babylonia, and their allies from the regions of Pekod, Shoa, and Koa, and all the army of Assyria. Yes, all of them are handsome young men, army officers and commanders, officers who have great fame, all riding on horses.

²⁴Their huge army will attack you with weapons, riding in chariots and pulling wagons that will carry the army supplies. They will surround you, carrying large and small shields, and wearing helmets. I will allow them to capture you and punish you in the way that they always punish their enemies. ²⁵Because I am very angry with you, I will cause them to act furiously toward you. They will cut off your noses and your ears. Then, those who are still alive, they will kill with their swords. They will take away your sons and daughters, and it will be like a fire that burns up your descendants. ²⁶They will strip off your clothes and your fine jewelry, and they will take them away.

²⁷In that way, I will stop all the immoral behavior that began when you became a prostitute in Egypt. You will no longer desire to do those things; you will no longer think about what you did in Egypt.

²⁸This is what I, Yahweh the Lord say: Those whom you hate, those with whom you became disgusted and from whom you turned away—I am about to allow them to capture you. ²⁹They will be cruel; they will take away everything that you own. They will leave you completely naked, and everyone will see that you truly are a prostitute. ³⁰It is because of what you have done that you will be punished in that way; you have been an immoral prostitute; you have slept with men of other nations, and you have made it impossible for me to accept you, because you have worshiped their idols. ³¹You have behaved like the people of Samaria, who are like your older sister. So I will cause you to be punished as they were punished.

³²This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You will suffer when you drink from a cup that is deep and large.

It will be as though you will drink from the same cup that the people of Samaria drank from.

And it is because you will drink what it is in that cup, many people will scorn you and make fun of you, because when you drink from the cup it will make you drunk and then you will be overcome with sadness.

³³When you become very drunk, you will become very sad,

because drinking what is in that cup will cause you to be ruined; everyone will leave you.

This is what happened to the people of Samaria, who are like your sister.

³⁴You will drink all the liquid that is in that cup;

then you will break that cup into pieces

and use those pieces to cut your breasts because you will be very sad.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

³⁵Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because you have forgotten me and rejected me, I must punish you for your immoral behavior and for being a prostitute."

³⁶Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, judge the people of those two cities represented by Oholah and Oholibah. You must remind them of their detestable behavior. ³⁷It is as though they have committed adultery and have murdered people. They have been unfaithful to me by worshiping idols. They have even sacrificed their own children, who belonged to me, in fire. ³⁸They have done other disgraceful things: they have caused my temple to be an unacceptable place for worship, and they treat the Sabbath days like any other day. ³⁹On the same day that they

sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my temple, which caused it to be an unacceptable place for worshiping me. They did these things in my own house!

⁴⁰They sent messages to men in countries far away. And as those men were coming, the two sisters bathed themselves for them, painted their eyebrows, and put on jewelry. ⁴¹They sat on a beautiful couch, with a table in front of it on which they had put incense and olive oil that belonged to me.

⁴²Soon there was a noisy crowd around them. Among the crowd there were drunkards who had come from the desert of Arabia. They put bracelets on the arms of the two sisters, and they put beautiful crowns on their heads.

⁴³Then I said about the woman who had become exhausted by sleeping with many men, 'Now those men will act toward her as though she were a prostitute, because that is all that she is.' ⁴⁴So they slept with those two women, Oholah and Oholibah, as men sleep with prostitutes. ⁴⁵But righteous men will condemn them to be punished, as women who commit adultery and who murder others are punished, because those women commit adultery and they murder others.

⁴⁶So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Bring a mob to attack Samaria and Jerusalem, and allow that mob to cause the people of those cities to be terrified; allow the mob to rob them. ⁴⁷The mob will throw stones at them to kill them; they will cut them into pieces with their swords, they will kill their sons and daughters, and they will burn down their houses.

⁴⁸In that way I will cause them to stop their immoral behavior. This will warn other women to not imitate what you people of Jerusalem are doing. ⁴⁹I will punish you people of Jerusalem for your immoral behavior and for worshiping idols. Then you will know that I, Yahweh the Lord, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

Chapter 24

¹Almost nine years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the tenth day of the tenth month of that year, Yahweh gave me this message: ²"Son of man, write down what day of the month this is. On this day the army of the king of Babylon has surrounded Jerusalem. ³Tell those rebellious Israelite people in Babylon a parable. Say this to them: This is what Yahweh the Lord says:

'Pour water into the cooking pot

and put the pot on the fire.

⁴Put into the pot some pieces of meat from one of your best sheep:

put in the leg and shoulder, which are the best pieces.

Then fill the rest of the pot with the best bones.

⁵Pile wood on the fire,

and cook the bones and the meat in the boiling water.'

⁶Do that because this is what Yahweh the Lord says:

'Terrible things will happen to Jerusalem; it is city that is full of murderers,

a city that is like a corroded copper pot,

and the corrosion cannot be removed.

Take the pieces of meat out of the pot,

but do not choose which pieces to take out.

⁷The blood of the people who were murdered in Jerusalem is still there;
they were murdered on the bare rocks,
not on the soil, where their blood could be covered.

⁸But I am the one who caused the blood of those who were murdered to be smeared on the bare rock,
where their blood could not be covered;
I did that in order that I could see it and then be angry and get revenge.'

⁹Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say:
'Terrible things will happen to that city that is full of murderers!
It will be as though I also will pile high the wood in the fire.

¹⁰So heap on the wood
and light the fire!
Cook the meat well,
and mix some spices with it;
cook it until the bones are black.

¹¹Then set the empty pot on the coals of the fire
until the pot becomes very hot and the copper glows,
so that the corrosion will disappear.

¹²It is as though I tried to get rid of that corrosion,
but I was not able to do it,
not even by putting that pot on the fire.

¹³The corrosion in the pot represents your immoral behavior. I tried to cleanse you from your wicked behavior, but you did not allow me to do that. So you will not be cleansed from the guilt of your sin until I have punished you and I am no longer angry.

¹⁴I, Yahweh, have said that I will surely punish you. And it is time for me to do that. I will not change my mind; I will not refrain from punishing you, and I will not pity you. I will judge you and punish you as you deserve to be punished for your sinful behavior. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it.'"

¹⁵One day Yahweh gave me this message: ¹⁶"Son of man, I am going to suddenly take from you your wife by means of a disease, your wife, whom you love very much. But when she dies, do not show that you are sad or lament or cry. ¹⁷Groan quietly; do not cry openly for her. Keep your turban wrapped around your head, and instead of being barefoot, keep your sandals on your feet. Do not cover the lower part of your face to show that you are sad. And do not eat the kind of food that people who are mourning usually eat."

¹⁸So one morning I talked to the people as usual, and that evening my wife suddenly died. The next morning I did what Yahweh had told me to do.

¹⁹Then the people asked me, "What do the things that you are doing signify to us?"

²⁰I answered them, "This is what Yahweh told me: ²¹Tell the Israelite people that I am about to destroy the temple, the building that you are very proud of, the building that you delight to look at. Your children whom you left in Jerusalem when you were forced to come to Babylon—your enemies will kill them. ²²When that happens, you will do as I have done: You will not cover the lower part of your faces, or eat the kinds of food that people who are mourning usually eat. ²³You will keep your turbans wrapped around your heads and keep your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or cry, but your bodies will become very thin and slowly die; I will not forgive your sins at all. And you will groan for each other. ²⁴Ezekiel will be a warning to you, and you must do what he has done. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh the Lord have the power to do what I say that I will do."

²⁵Then Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, soon I will destroy their sacred temple, which they rejoice about and which they respect and delight to look at, and I will get rid of their sons and daughters also. ²⁶On that day, someone will escape from Jerusalem and come and tell you what has happened there. ²⁷When that happens, you will be able to speak again without constraint. You two will talk together. You will be a warning to the people; and they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

Chapter 25

¹Some time later, Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, turn toward where the Ammon people group lives, and prophesy about the terrible things that will happen to them. ³Say about them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: You shouted joyfully when my temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and when the country of Israel was ruined, and when the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon. ⁴Therefore, I am going to allow an army of the people in the east to come and conquer you. They will set up their tents in your country and live there. They will eat the fruit from your fruit trees and drink the milk from your cattle. ⁵I will cause your capital city of Rabbah to become a pasture for camels, and the rest of Ammon, where your people are now living, to become only a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ⁶This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You clapped your hands joyfully and stomped your feet, and laughed because you despised the people in the land of Israel. ⁷Therefore, I will use my power against you, and I will enable other nations to conquer you and take you away like any other possessions of yours. I will destroy you completely, and you will no longer be one of the nations. When that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.'"

⁸This is also what the Lord Yahweh says: The people of Moab south of Ammon and the people of Seir south of Moab despised Israel and said, "The people of Israel have become as unimportant as all the other nations!"

⁹Therefore I will destroy the cities that protect the borders of Moab, starting at Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kiriathaim, the finest cities in Moab. ¹⁰I will enable people from the east to conquer Moab and also to conquer Ammon. As the result, just as I will cause Ammon to be no longer remembered by other nations, ¹¹I will also punish the people of Moab. When that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

¹²This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: "You people of Edom are guilty of getting revenge on the people of Judah.

¹³Therefore this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I will use my power against the people of Edom and will get rid of their men and their animals. I will ruin the land from the region of Teman in central Edom to the region of Dedan in the south of Edom, and their enemies will kill many of their men. ¹⁴The Israelite people will use their power to get revenge on the people of Edom. They will show the people of Edom that I have been angry with them and that I will punish them. I will get revenge on the people of Edom. Then they will know that I, Yahweh the Lord, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

¹⁵This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: "The Philistia people group wanted very much for a long time to get revenge on the people of Judah. They very maliciously wanted to destroy Judah. ¹⁶Therefore this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I am about to use my power against the Philistia people. I will get rid of the Kereth people group and all those who live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. ¹⁷I will get great revenge on them and show that I am

angry with them by the way I punish them. And when I get revenge on them, they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

Chapter 26

¹It was almost eleven years after the Babylonians had taken the Israelites to their land, on the first day of the month, Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ²“Son of man, the people of the city of Tyre shouted joyfully and they said about Jerusalem, ‘Jerusalem, the city from which traders went to many nations, is now destroyed. Now people from all over the world will come to us to buy and sell things. We will prosper because Jerusalem has now been ruined!’ ³Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: ‘I am now your enemy, you people of Tyre. I will cause the armies of many nations to come and attack your city, as the waves of the sea beat against the shores. ⁴Their soldiers will destroy the walls around Tyre and tear down your towers. The city will be completely destroyed. Then they will scrape away the rubble and cause the city to become a bare rock. ⁵Out in the sea, the part of your city that is on an island will become a place where men spread their fishing nets to dry them. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have predicted it: People from many nations will carry off everything of value in your city. ⁶The people in small villages on the coast near Tyre—your enemies will kill them with their swords. Then people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.’

⁷This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say is going to happen: From the north, I am going to bring the most powerful king in the world, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, with his army to attack Tyre. They will bring horses and chariots, and men who ride the horses and men who drive the chariots; it will be a huge army. ⁸In the battles in the small villages on the coast, their soldiers will kill many people with their swords. Then they will build up walls outside the city of Tyre. They will build a dirt ramp up to the top of the wall, and they will all hold up shields to protect themselves from arrows being shot from the ground. ⁹The king will direct the soldiers who operate the rams to batter the wall, and those who will use iron bars to tear down the towers in the wall. ¹⁰The king will have a huge number of horses, and the stamping of their hooves will raise dust to cover the whole city. It will be as though the walls tremble because of the noise made by the horses, the supply wagons, and the chariots when they enter the city where the enemy has broken down the walls. ¹¹The horses will trample all of the streets of the city with their hooves. The soldiers will kill the people with their swords; they will cause the monuments that celebrated their strength to collapse. ¹²They will take away all the people’s valuable possessions and steal the things that the merchants sell. They will tear down the walls of the houses and destroy their fine houses. Then they will throw into the sea the stones from the walls of those houses and the timber and the rubble. ¹³No longer will the people sing noisy songs or play their harps. ¹⁴They will cause the city to become a bare rock and only a place where men spread their fishing nets. And the city will never be rebuilt.” Those things will certainly happen because the Lord Yahweh has declared that they will happen.

¹⁵This is also what the Lord Yahweh says about the people of Tyre: When the people in Tyre groan because the enemy has wounded them, when many people die, and when the enemy destroys the city, the people living along the coast will tremble because they are afraid. ¹⁶Then all the kings in the cities along the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and their embroidered clothes. They will be terrified, and they will sit on the ground, trembling. They will be shocked because of what has happened to the city of Tyre. ¹⁷Then they will sing a sad song about the city, like this:

‘The famous city, in which many men who sailed on the seas lived,
is now no more!

The people of that city had great power as they sailed, but now they are at the bottom of the sea;
they terrified all the people living near them.

¹⁸But now everyone living along the coast is terrified because the enemy has destroyed the great city.

It is as though the land along the coast itself were trembling;
the people on the islands in the sea are terrified because that city exists no more.'

¹⁹This is also what the Lord Yahweh says: 'When I cause everyone to leave the city of Tyre, like people have left other cities in which no one lives any longer, and when I cause the huge waves of the sea to cover the city, ²⁰then I will bring the people of that city down to be with everyone else who is dead, those who died long ago. I will cause them to live in the place below the earth that is like old ruins, with those who have gone down to that pit previously, and they will never return to the earth, to where people are alive. ²¹I will cause them to die in a horrible way, and that will be the end of them. People will search for that city, but it will no longer exist.' This is what the Lord Yahweh declares will happen.

Chapter 27

¹Yahweh said this to me: ²"Son of man, sing a funeral song about Tyre. ³The city of Tyre is on an island at the edge of the sea, and their merchants traded with people groups who live along many seacoasts. This is what Yahweh the Lord says that you should tell them:

You people of Tyre said that your city was very beautiful.

⁴You controlled what people bought and sold—the people who lived along the sea.

Those who built your city made it very beautiful.

⁵You and your city were like a huge ship

that you built from fir trees on Mount Hermon.

Then you took cedar wood from Lebanon to make a mast for the ship.

⁶You carved oars from oak trees from the region of Bashan.

You made the deck from cypress wood from the island of Cyprus,

and you covered the decks with ivory.

⁷You made the sails from fine embroidered linen from Egypt;

those sails were like flags that people could see far away.

⁸Men from the cities of Sidon and Arvad pulled your oars;

the men who steered the ship were experienced sailors from Tyre.

⁹Experienced craftsmen from Gebal were on board. They caulked the seams of your ships.

Sailors from many countries came in their ships to buy and sell goods with you.

¹⁰Men who came from the far away lands of Persia, Lud, and Put were soldiers in your army.

They hung their shields and helmets on the walls of your city;

this caused many people to admire your city.

¹¹Men from the cities of Arvad and Helek were watchmen on your city walls;

men from the city of Gammad were in your towers.

They also hung their shields on your walls;
they also made your city very beautiful.

¹²Because of the many things that you had to trade, men from Tarshish sent merchants who brought silver, iron, tin, and lead to trade for things that you had.

¹³Merchants from the regions of Greece, Tubal, and Meshech brought slaves and things made from bronze to trade for things that you had.

¹⁴Men from Beth Togarmah brought work horses, war horses, and mules to trade for things that you had.

¹⁵Merchants came to you from the island of Rhodes.

People from many nations by the sea traded with you;
they brought ivory and valuable black ebony wood to trade for things that you had.

¹⁶Because you had very many things to trade, people from the land of Aram brought to you valuable turquoise stones, purple cloth, embroidered cloth, fine linen cloth, and jewelry made from coral and rubies to you.

¹⁷Men from Judah and Israel brought wheat from the city of Minnith in Ammon, and cakes, honey, olive oil, and ointment to trade for your things.

¹⁸Because you had very many things to sell, men from the city of Damascus brought wine from the town of Helbon and white wool from the area of Zahar to trade for many things that you had.

¹⁹Men from the tribe of Dan and Greek men from the area of Izal brought things made of iron, cassia spice, and fragrant calamus seeds to trade for things that you had.

²⁰Merchants came from Dedan in southern Edom bringing saddle blankets to trade for things that you had.

²¹Men from Arabia and all the rulers of the region of Kedar sent merchants to trade lambs and rams and male goats for things that you had.

²²Merchants from Sheba and Raamah in Arabia brought many kinds of very good spices and jewels and gold to exchange for things that you had.

²³Men came from Haran, Kanneh, Eden, Sheba, Ashur and Kilmad in Mesopotamia with their goods. ²⁴They brought beautiful things to trade with you: Blue cloth, embroidered cloth, and rugs of many colors that were rolled up and tied with ropes.

²⁵Cargo ships from Tarshish carried all those things that you sold;
the warehouses on your island were full of all those things and brought you great honor.

²⁶The men who row your ships took the ships full of cargo out onto the large seas.

But now the strong east wind has wrecked those ships.

²⁷Everything in the ships has been lost—
all the valuable cargo and many of the sailors and ship pilots,
the ship workers and merchants and soldiers.

On the day that the ships were wrecked,
all their crews sank to the bottom of the sea.

²⁸The people in cities along the coast trembled
when they heard your ship pilots cry out.

²⁹All the men who pulled the oars will leave the ships;
the sailors and pilots will come to the shore and stand on the beach.

³⁰They will cry aloud because of what has happened to you,
and they weep bitterly.
They will throw earth on their heads
and roll around in ashes.

³¹They shave their heads to show that they are very sad because of what has happened to you,
and they put on rough sackcloth to mourn.
They weep for you very bitterly
and mourn for you.

³²While they wail and mourn because of what has happened to you
they sing this sad funeral song:
'There was certainly never a city like Tyre,
which now is silent,
covered by the waves of the sea.'

³³The goods that your merchants traded
were things that pleased the people of many countries.
Kings in very distant places became rich
from the money they made by buying and selling with you.

³⁴But now your city is like a ship wrecked in the sea;
and everything in it is broken, and it is now at the bottom of the sea.
All of your cargo and your sailors have sunk to the bottom of the sea.

³⁵All the people who live along the seacoast are appalled
because of what has happened to you.
Their kings are very horrified;
they shake with fear as they watch.

³⁶The merchants of the other nations shake their heads
because it is difficult for them to believe what has happened;
now your city has disappeared,

and it will not exist anymore.”

Chapter 28

¹Then Yahweh gave me another message. He said: ²“Son of man, give to the king of Tyre this message from me, Yahweh the Lord:

‘You have very proudly claimed that you are a god,
and that you are untouchable, since you sit on a throne in a city on an island in the sea!
You boast that you are a god,
but you are in reality only a man, not a god.

³You think that you are wiser than Daniel was,
and you think that you can understand every secret.

⁴Because you were wise and shrewd in business, you have become very rich;
you have acquired much gold and silver for your treasuries.

⁵Yes, it is true that by buying and selling wisely, you have become very rich;
and because you are rich, you have become very proud.

⁶Therefore, Yahweh the Lord says that
because you think that you are as wise as a god,
⁷he will bring a foreign army to attack your country,
an army that causes other nations to be terrified.
They will pull out their swords to strike you,
you who think that you have marvelous wisdom,
and they will ruin all your beautiful things and make them ugly.

⁸They will bring you down to your grave;
you will die violently
like those who died in the sea.

⁹Then you will certainly not tell those who are killing you
that you are a god,
because they will know that you are not a god;
you are only a man.

¹⁰You will die like other people die, those who are unacceptable to God,
those whom foreigners kill. That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.”

¹¹Yahweh also gave me this message: ¹²"Son of man, sing a sad song about the king of Tyre. Tell him that Yahweh the Lord says this to him:

"You were completely perfect,
extremely wise and handsome.

¹³You had a wonderful life, because you were in my beautiful garden in Eden.
Your clothes were decorated with many kinds of very valuable stones—
ruby, topaz, emerald, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and beryl stones.
Those stones were set in gold mountings
which I prepared for you on the day that I created you.

¹⁴I appointed you to be a strong angel to guard the people.
I placed you on my holy mountain,
and you walked among fiery stones.

¹⁵You were completely good in all that you did
from the day that you were created,
until you started to do wicked things.

¹⁶Then you became busy buying and selling things,
you started to act violently,
and you sinned.
So I disgraced you.

You, the angel who was supposed to guard the people—I forced you to leave my own mountain;
I forced you to leave those fiery stones.

¹⁷You were extremely proud
because you were very handsome.
Because you loved beautiful things,
you did things that wise people do not do.
So I threw you to the ground,
and allowed other kings who saw you to laugh at you.

¹⁸By committing many sins
and by buying and selling things dishonestly,
you caused the places where people worshiped me to become unacceptable to me.
So I will make a fire that will burn your city down.
Your city will be burned completely,

and the people who watch it will see
that what is left of the city will only be ashes.

¹⁹All the people who knew what your city was like previously
will be appalled.

Now your city will disappear,
and it will not exist anymore.”

²⁰Then Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²¹“Son of man, turn toward the city of Sidon, and announce the terrible things that will happen to it. ²²Give the people of Sidon this message from Yahweh the Lord. Tell them:

‘I am your enemy, you people of Sidon.

By what I do to you,

I will show you how great I am,

and you will know that it is Yahweh who punishes you and judges you with justice.

You will know that I am different from you, and that I will be honored by what I do to you!

²³I will send a plague on you,

and I will send enemies to come and kill you in your streets.

They will attack you from every direction,

and they will slaughter your people inside the walls of your city.

Then everyone will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.’

²⁴No longer will people who live near the people of Israel hurt them as painful briars and sharp thorns hurt people. And then the Israelites will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

²⁵And this is also what Yahweh the Lord says: “I will gather them from distant countries where I have scattered them. And the other people groups will see that I am set apart and honored, when the house of Israel makes their homes in the land I gave my servant Jacob! ²⁶My people will live safely in Israel; they will build houses and plant vineyards. And when I punish the nearby people groups that despised them, my people will know that it is I, Yahweh their God, who has done this.”

Chapter 29

¹Almost ten years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the twelfth day of the tenth month of that year, Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ²“Son of man, turn toward Egypt and proclaim the terrible things that will happen to the king of Egypt and all his people. ³Give the king this message from me, for I am Yahweh the Lord:

‘Know this, Pharaoh, king of Egypt that I, Yahweh, am your enemy.

You are like a great monster that lies in the streams of the Nile River.

You are so bold to say that the Nile River is yours,

and that you made it for yourself.

⁴But it will be as though I will put hooks in your jaws
and drag you out onto the land,
with fish sticking to your scales.

⁵I will leave you and all those fish to die in the desert;
you will fall to the ground,
and no one will pick up your corpse to bury you,
because I declare that your body will be food for the wild animals and birds.

⁶When that happens, all the people of Egypt will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

The Israelite people have trusted that you would help them. But you have been like a reed pole in their hands.

⁷And when they leaned on that pole, it broke and tore open their shoulders. When they leaned on you, you were like a pole that broke in their hand, and as a result you caused their legs to be wrenched and that made it impossible for them to stand.'

⁸Therefore Yahweh the Lord says, 'I will bring Egypt's enemies to attack them with their swords; they will kill Egypt's people and animals. ⁹Egypt will become an empty desert. Then the people of Egypt will know that it is I, Yahweh, who has the power to do what he says he will do, and that he will punish the people of Egypt for saying that the Nile River is theirs because they made it. ¹⁰I am against you and your streams, and I will ruin Egypt and make it into an empty desert, from the city of Migdol in the north to Syene in the south, as far south as the border of Cush. ¹¹For forty years no one will walk through that area, and no one will live there. ¹²Egypt will be barren, and it will be surrounded by other abandoned nations. The cities of Egypt will be empty and without people for forty years, and the surrounding lands will be the same. I will scatter the people of Egypt to countries far away.'

¹³But Yahweh the Lord also says this: 'At the end of forty years, I will enable the people of Egypt to return home again. ¹⁴I will bring back the people of Egypt whom their enemies had captured, and I will allow them to live again in the region of Pathros in the south, where they lived previously. But Egypt will continue to be a very unimportant kingdom. ¹⁵It will be the least important of all the nations; it will never again be greater than the nearby countries. I will cause Egypt to be very weak, and they will never again rule over other nations. ¹⁶When that happens, the leaders of Israel will no longer think of asking Egypt to help them. When I punish Egypt, the Israelites will be reminded that they previously sinned by trusting that Egypt could help them. And the people of Israel will know that Yahweh the Lord has the power to do what he says he will do.'"

¹⁷Almost twenty-seven years after we Israelites prisoners had been taken to Babylonia, on the first day of the new year, Yahweh gave me this message: ¹⁸"Son of man, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon fought very hard against Tyre, with the result that their heads were rubbed bare under their helmets, and their shoulders became raw. But Nebuchadnezzar and his army did not get any valuable things from Tyre to reward them for their hard work in that campaign. ¹⁹Therefore, Yahweh the Lord says that he will enable King Nebuchadnezzar's army to conquer Egypt. They will carry away from there all the valuable things, in order that the king can give them to his soldiers. ²⁰Yahweh says that he will enable them to conquer Egypt as payment for what they did to Tyre, because Nebuchadnezzar and his army were working for him, doing what he wanted them to do, which was to destroy Tyre."

²¹Yahweh said to me, "Some day I will make Israel become a mighty nation. When that happens, I will make them listen to what you tell them. Then they will know that all this has happened because I, Yahweh, will have done this."

Chapter 30

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²“Son of man, prophesy about what will happen to Egypt. Say that this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, say:

‘Weep and wail,

because terrible things will happen one day that is coming.

³That day is near,

the day when I, Yahweh, will punish people;

it will be like a day of full of storm clouds and disaster for many nations.

⁴An enemy army will come to attack Egypt with their swords,

and there will be great distress for the people in Cush.

The enemy army will kill many people in Egypt;

they will take away everything of value,

and they will even tear the buildings down to their foundations.

⁵Soldiers of Cush, Libya, Lydia, and all the foreigners in the land of Egypt, together with the Jews living in Egypt—they will all die because of war.’

⁶This is what Yahweh says:

‘This army will defeat Egypt’s allies,

and the power that the people of Egypt are so proud of will end.

From the city of Migdol in the north to the city of Syene in the south, they will kill the soldiers of Egypt’s allies.

This is what Yahweh the Lord declares.

⁷Egypt’s allies’ soldiers will be shocked, and her allies’ cities will be destroyed, surrounded by ruined cities in nearby nations.

⁸Then, when I cause everything in Egypt to be burned down,

and when I cause their enemies to defeat all their allies,

people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁹At that time, I will send messengers to go swiftly up the Nile River in boats to terrify the people of Cush, who still think they are safe. They will be horrified when they hear that Egypt has been destroyed. This will soon happen!

¹⁰This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say:

By the power of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

I will destroy very many people in Egypt.

¹¹Nebuchadnezzar and his army, whose soldiers have no pity on anyone,

will come to destroy Egypt.

They will pull out their swords
and fill Egypt with the corpses of those whom they have killed.

¹²I will cause the streams of the Nile River to become dry,
and I will sell the nation of Egypt to evil men.
By the power of foreigners
I will ruin the land and everything that is in it.
That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it will happen.

¹³This is also what I, Yahweh the Lord, say:
I will cause the enemy to destroy the idols
in the city of Memphis.
No longer will there be a king in Egypt,
and I will terrify everyone in the land of Egypt.

¹⁴I will cause all people to leave the region of Pathros in southern Egypt.
I will start fires in the city of Zoan in northeast Egypt
and punish the people in the city of Thebes in southern Egypt.

¹⁵I will punish the soldiers in the fortress of Pelusium in northern Egypt,
and I will destroy the people in Thebes.

¹⁶I will burn Egypt with fire;
the people in Pelusium will suffer severe pain.
Enemies will conquer Thebes,
and the enemies of Memphis will attack the people who live there every day.

¹⁷The enemy will kill many young men in the cities of Heliopolis and Bubastis in northern Egypt,
and the people who are left will have to go to Babylon.

¹⁸It will be a dark day of destruction at the city of Tahpanhes in northeast Egypt
when I cause the power of Egypt to end;
that country will no longer be strong.
It will be as though a dark cloud will cover Egypt,
because the people of its villages will go to Babylon as prisoners.

¹⁹That is how I will punish Egypt,
and people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

²⁰Almost eleven years after the Babylonians took us Israelites to their country, Yahweh gave me another message on the seventh day of the first month of that year. He said, ²¹"Son of man, I have enabled the army of Nebuchadnezzar to defeat the army of the king of Egypt. It is as though I have broken one of the arms of the king of Egypt, and it has not been bandaged in order that it could be healed, and it has not been put in splints in order that after it heals the arm will be strong enough to hold a sword. ²²Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I am the enemy of the king of Egypt. I will completely destroy Egypt's power; it is as though now I will break both of the king's arms, the good one and the broken one, and cause the sword to fall from his hand. ²³I will scatter the people of Egypt among the nations. ²⁴It is as though I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put a sword in his hand, and as though I will break the arms of the king of Egypt, and he will groan in front of the king of Babylon like a soldier who is wounded and about to die. ²⁵I will cause the king of Babylon to become stronger and stronger, and the king of Egypt to become completely weak. When that happens, when I make the Babylonian army strong, they will use that power to attack Egypt. ²⁶I will scatter the people of Egypt among the nations. And when that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

Chapter 31

¹Almost eleven years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, Yahweh gave me another message, on the first day of the third month of that year. He said, ²"Son of man, say to the king of Egypt and to the immense numbers of his people,

'You think that there is no country whose power is as great as the power of your country.

³You think that your country is as great as Assyria was.

Well, Assyria was like a tall cedar tree in Lebanon;

it had big beautiful branches

that provided shade for other trees in the forest.

It was very tall;

and the branches of the tallest trees made a treetop that was a roof over the forest.

⁴Water came to it from deep springs,

and as a result that cedar tree grew tall and very green.

Then water flowed around the base of the tree

into channels that took water to other nearby trees in the open countryside.

⁵That huge tree grew very tall,

higher than all the other trees around it.

Its branches grew very thick and long

because of the abundant water at the base of the tree.

⁶Birds built their nests in the branches,

and wild animals gave birth to their young under those branches.

And it was as though people of all the great nations lived in the shade of that tree.

⁷It was majestic and beautiful;

its branches spread out widely

because the roots of the tree grew down into the ground where there was a plentiful supply of water.

⁸The cedar trees in my garden in Eden were not as great as that tree,

and the branches of the fir trees were not as long and thick as the branches of that cedar tree.

And the branches of the plane trees were not as long and thick, either.

No tree in my garden was as beautiful as that cedar tree.

⁹Because I caused that tree to become very beautiful

because of its magnificent green branches,

all the leaders of other countries represented by those other trees in Eden envied the country represented by that tree.'

¹⁰Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: 'That tree, which represents Assyria, grew very tall; its top was higher than the other trees, and it became very proud because it was so tall. ¹¹Therefore, I enabled another mighty nation to conquer it, to destroy it as it deserved to be destroyed. I have already discarded it. ¹²A foreign army, one that has caused people of other nations to be terrified, cut it down and left it. Its branches fell on the mountains and in the valleys. Some of its branches lay broken in all the ravines in the land. All the people of other nations came out from being under its shade and left it. ¹³Birds of the sky settled on the fallen tree, and wild animals lived among its branches. ¹⁴As a result, no other tree, even if the tree has plenty of water, will ever grow to such great height, or lift its top above the branches higher than other trees. They will all certainly die and decay; they will go to the place of the dead; they will go to the grave.'"

¹⁵This is what Yahweh the Lord says: "When that great tree was cut down, it was as though the springs that watered it mourned for it, because I caused the plentiful water from the springs to dry up. It was as if I had caused the mountains in Lebanon to mourn for it, and all the trees there to weep. ¹⁶I caused the people of other nations to tremble when they heard that tree fall to the ground—when they heard that Assyria had been destroyed. All the other people groups had also been like beautiful, well-watered trees in Lebanon, but they were comforted when the king represented by that cedar tree arrived among them in the place where they were as dead people. ¹⁷The people represented by the trees that grew in the shade of that huge tree, the allies of the great nation that the cedar tree represents, had also died and gone down to where the dead people are.

¹⁸This parable is a warning to you people of Egypt. You think that there is no other nation that is as great and glorious as yours is. But your nation will also be destroyed, along with those other nations. Your people will be there among the other people who are not fit to worship me, people who have been killed by their enemies' swords. That is what will happen to the king of Egypt and all his many people." This is what the Lord Yahweh has declared will happen.

Chapter 32

¹Almost twelve years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, Yahweh gave me another message, on the first day of the twelfth month of that year. He told me, ²"Son of man, sing a sad song about Pharaoh the king of Egypt. Sing this to him:

'People think that you are like a lion among the nations;

but you are like a sea monster in the river

thrashing around in the water,

churning up the water with your feet
and making all the water muddy.

³But I, the Lord Yahweh, say to you
that I will send many people to throw my net over you,
and that they will haul you up onto the land.

⁴They will throw you into a field, where I will leave you to your fate.
I will allow the birds to sit on you,
and all the wild animals will eat the flesh of your corpse until their stomachs are full.

⁵I will cause them to scatter your flesh on the hills
and fill the valleys with the parts of your rotting body.

⁶I will cause them to fill the land with your blood,
and also the mountains;
they will fill the ravines with your blood.

⁷When I kill you,
I will cover the sky and not allow the stars to shine.
I will put a dark cloud in front of the sun,
and the moon will not shine.

⁸I will cause the stars in the sky to be dark,
and there will be darkness over your entire land;
this will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it.

⁹And I will terrify the people of many nations when they hear how I destroy you,
there where I will send you,
in countries that you have never known about.

¹⁰I will cause many people to be shocked because of what has happened to you;
their kings will be horrified and shudder because I destroyed you,
when I swung my sword in front of them to kill you.
At the time that you die,
all of them will tremble,
fearing that I will kill them, too.

¹¹I, the Lord Yahweh tell you, Egypt,
that the swords of the army of the king of Babylon will strike you.

¹²I will cause the mighty soldiers of Babylonia
to kill your best soldiers—
the soldiers of Babylonia, who are more ruthless than those of any other nation.
They will cause the people of Egypt to quit being proud,
because they will kill very many of your people.

¹³I will destroy all the cattle in Egypt,
which graze alongside the streams.
As a result, the water in those streams will never again become muddy
because of people and cattle walking in them.

¹⁴Then I will allow the streams in Egypt to become calm again
and to flow as smoothly as olive oil flows.” This is what the Lord Yahweh announces.

¹⁵He also says this: “When I cause Egypt to become empty,
when I strip off everything that grows on the land,
and when I get rid of all the people who live there,
people will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

¹⁶There will be a sad song that people will sing about Egypt.
Women of many nations will sing it;
they will chant it about Egypt and all its many people.”
This will surely happen because Yahweh has said that it would happen.

¹⁷On the fifteenth day of that same month, Yahweh gave me another message. He said,

¹⁸“Son of man, wail about the many people of Egypt, because I will send them to the place under the earth, where they and people of other mighty nations will be. I will send them there, along with others, down to the place where the dead are. ¹⁹Say to them, ‘You people of Egypt, you think that you are more beautiful than the people of other nations. But you also will descend to the place where the godless dead people are. ²⁰You will die along with many others whom their enemies have killed. Their enemies have begun to attack, and they will drag away a huge number people of Egypt. ²¹In the place where the dead people are, mighty leaders of other countries will make fun of you people of Egypt and your allies. They will say that you have come to lie dead with them, those godless people whom their enemies killed.

²²The dead of the people of Assyria and their army will also be there. They will be surrounded by the dead of others whom their enemies killed. ²³Their graves will be there in the deep pit, and the dead soldiers of their army will lie around their graves. The dead of all those who had terrified so many others will also be there, for their enemies will have killed them, too.

²⁴Many, many people from the country of Elam will be there, too, and Elam’s servants, because their enemies will have killed them. These were soldiers who had terrified people in many places. At that time they will lie there in that deep pit below the earth, and they, along with the others who have gone there, will be disgraced.

²⁵The people of Elam in their huge numbers will lie there among others who were slaughtered, surrounded by the graves of a huge crowd of other people. While they were alive, they caused people of other nations to be terrified; but they were godless, and now, because their enemies will have killed them, they will lie with others in that deep pit, disgraced.

²⁶The dead of all the soldiers of the lands of Meshech and Tubal will be there, surrounded by the graves of a huge crowd. While they were alive, they also caused people in many places to be terrified. They are uncircumcised people whom their enemies will have killed. ²⁷They will not lie there beside the uncircumcised warriors who have gone to the grave highly honored with their shields over their bodies and their swords under their heads. While they were alive, they terrified many people on the earth.

²⁸You king of Egypt, I will kill you also, and you will lie there with other godless people whom their enemies will have killed.

²⁹People of Edom will be there, along with their kings and leaders. They were powerful, but I will kill them. They will lie there in the place where the other godless people lie.

³⁰All the rulers of countries north of Israel, including people from the city of Sidon, will be there. Because of their power, they terrified other people, but they will lie there. They were godless, and they will lie there along with others whom their enemies will have killed. They, along with everyone else who goes down into that deep pit, will be disgraced.

³¹The king of Egypt and all his army will see them, and they will be comforted about the death of their many people, because they know that there were other huge groups of people whom their enemies killed. ³²While that king was living, I allowed him to terrify others in many countries, but he and his huge army will be there among other godless people whom their enemies have killed." This will certainly surely happen because the Lord Yahweh has said that it would happen.

Chapter 33

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, speak to your fellow Israelites and say this to them: 'Suppose that I bring an enemy army to attack a country, and the people of that country choose one of their own people to be a watchman. ³And suppose that he sees the enemy army come into view, and that he blows a trumpet to warn everyone. ⁴If anyone hears the trumpet but pays no attention, and if that person then dies because of the enemy, that person is responsible for his own death. ⁵If he had paid attention, he would have saved his own life. But as it is, he will die, and it will be his own fault.

⁶Now suppose that the watchman sees the enemy army coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people. Then suppose that one of his people dies because of the enemy. That person will die because of his own mistake, but I will hold the watchman responsible for it.

⁷Son of man, this parable has a meaning for you. I have appointed you to be a watchman for the Israelites. So always listen to what I say, and warn the people for me. ⁸When I say to some wicked person, 'You wicked person, you will surely die because of your sins,' you must tell him what I said. If you do not speak to that person to warn him to turn away from his sins, that wicked person will die because of his sins, but I will make you responsible for his death. ⁹But if you warn that wicked person that he should turn away from his sins, but if he does not do so, then he will die because of his sins, but you will have saved your own life.

¹⁰Son of man, say to the Israelite people, 'This is what you all are saying: "The guilt that we feel for disobeying God's laws and sinning is like a heavy weight on us, and our sins are hurting us, and we are slowly dying. So what can we do to continue to remain alive?"' ¹¹Say to them, 'Yahweh the Lord says, "As surely as I am alive, I am not happy when wicked people die; I would prefer that they turn away from their wicked behavior and continue to live. So repent! Turn away from your evil behavior! You Israelite people, do you really want to die?"'

¹²Therefore, Son of man, say to your fellow Israelites that if good people start to disobey me, the fact that they were previously righteous will not keep me from punishing them. Similarly, if wicked people turn away from their wicked behavior, they will not die because of those sins. And if good people start to sin, I will not allow the fact that they had been good to keep me from punishing them now. ¹³If I tell those who do what is right that they will surely remain alive because of all the good they do, but then if they turn away and become proud of all their good deeds, then I will ignore all the good things that they had done before. I will make sure that they will die because of the evil things that they have done. ¹⁴Continue to tell the people these things: If I say to some wicked person, 'You will surely die because of your sins,' perhaps that person will stop doing evil and start doing what is just and right.

¹⁵For example, he might return what he took from another person to guarantee that that person would pay back what he owes, or he might return things that he has stolen, or he might obey the laws that will enable those who obey them to remain alive. If this happens, he will surely remain alive; he will not die because of the sins that he committed previously. ¹⁶I will ignore the sins that he previously committed; he will surely remain alive.

¹⁷Tell the people this: That they say that what I do is not fair, but that it is really what they do that is not fair. Then tell them these things, also: ¹⁸If a good person stops doing what is good and starts to do what is evil, it is fair that he should die because of his sins. ¹⁹And if a wicked person turns away from his wicked behavior and does what is right and fair, it is fair for him to remain alive because of doing that. ²⁰Remind the people that they are still saying that what I do is not fair. They can talk all they want, but I will punish each of them for what they do. Tell them this."

²¹Almost twelve years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the fifth day of the tenth month of that year, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me in Babylon and said, "Jerusalem has been captured!" ²²The evening before that man arrived, Yahweh took control of me. So when that man arrived, Yahweh enabled me to speak again; I was no longer forced to be silent.

²³Then Yahweh gave a message to me. He said, ²⁴"Son of man, the people who are living in the ruins in Israel are saying, 'Abraham was only one person, but Yahweh promised him that he and his descendants would possess this land. But we are many; so surely Yahweh has given us this land to possess.' ²⁵So send a message to them. Say, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: "You eat meat that still has the animal's blood in it. You still worship idols. And you still murder others. So should this land belong to you? ²⁶You rely on using your swords to obtain things that you want. You do many detestable things. Each of you sleeps with other men's wives. So should you really possess the land of Israel?"'

²⁷Send this message to them and tell them that this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, say to them: 'As surely as I am alive, those who are left in the ruins in Jerusalem—their enemies will also kill them. And those who are living in the countryside—wild animals will kill them. Those who are living in forts and caves will die from disease. ²⁸I will cause your country to become a desolate wasteland. You will no longer be proud of being a strong country. The mountains of Israel will become very desolate, with the result that no one will walk across them.' ²⁹Then, when I have caused their country to become a desolate wasteland because of all the disgusting things that you have done, they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

³⁰As for you, Son of man, your fellow Israelites here in Babylon stand beside the city wall or at the doors of their houses and are talking with each other. They are saying, 'Come and listen to the message that has come from Yahweh.' ³¹My people come to you as they often have done, and they sit in front of you to listen to what you say. But they do not do what you tell them that they must do. With their mouths they say that they love me, but in their inner beings they are eager to acquire things by doing what is unjust. ³²To them, you are only a man who sings them beautiful songs and plays a musical instrument well. They hear what you say, but they do not do what you tell them to do.

³³The terrible things that I have said will happen to them will surely happen. And then they will know that a prophet has been among them, and that you are that prophet."

Chapter 34

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"Son of man, speak my message against the leaders of Israel. They should be taking care of my people, like shepherds take care of their flocks. Say to them that this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, have to tell them: 'You shepherds of Israel, terrible things will happen to you because you take care only of yourselves. You should certainly take care of my sheep. ³But you are like shepherds who eat the fat sheep, who slaughter the best animals for their wool. You are not real shepherds at all. ⁴You have not taken care of the sick sheep; you have paid no attention to those who are wounded. You have not looked for the sheep who have wandered off. You rule over them with force and violence. ⁵Because you did not take care of them, my people have wandered away like sheep. And while they are scattered, wild animals attack and kill them, and then eat their flesh. ⁶My people wander like sheep all over the high hills and mountains. They are scattered all over the earth, and no one is searching for them.

⁷Therefore, you who should be acting like shepherds, listen to what I, Yahweh the Lord, have to say to you. ⁸As surely as I am alive, my people are like a flock of sheep without any shepherd, and as a result it is as though wild animals have attacked my people and eaten them. You shepherds did not search for them; instead, you only wanted to provide food for yourselves. ⁹Therefore, you who should be shepherds of my people, listen to me. ¹⁰I am opposed to you leaders. I will punish you for mistreating my people. I will remove you from taking care of my people; you will no longer feed yourselves while ignoring them. I will rescue my people from you, and you will no longer be able to butcher them and eat them.

¹¹I, the Lord Yahweh, tell you leaders that I myself will search for my sheep and take care of them. ¹²As a shepherd takes care of his sheep, I will rescue my people from all the places to which you scattered them, when disasters struck them and they were afraid. ¹³I will bring them back from those countries and gather them together again in their own land. I will lead my sheep to good pastureland on the hills of Israel, in the ravines, and in the villages of Israel. ¹⁴My sheep will graze in good pastures on the mountaintops. They will lie down in good grazing areas. ¹⁵I myself will take care of my people and allow them to lie down and rest. This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, promise. ¹⁶I will search for those who are lost; I will bring back the ones who have strayed away. I will bandage those who have been injured and strengthen those who are weak. But I will destroy those who are fat and powerful. I will act fairly toward my sheep, my people.

¹⁷And as for you, my people, my sheep, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: 'I will judge between each of you; I will separate those who are peaceful from those who are cruel and powerful. ¹⁸You leaders, you who are like strong sheep who do evil to the others: It is bad that you keep the best pastures for yourselves. It is even worse that you trample the good grass with your feet. It is bad that you yourselves drink the clear water. It is even worse that with your feet you cause the rest of the water to become muddy. ¹⁹You are forcing my flock to eat the grass that you have trampled and to drink the water that you have caused to become muddy!

²⁰Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to you: I myself will judge between those of you who are like the fat sheep and the rest of my people, those who are like the thin sheep. ²¹You who are like strong sheep, with your shoulders and buttocks you have shoved the others away. You butted them with your horns, until you chased them all away from the good pastureland. ²²But I will rescue my people, and you will no longer steal from them. I will judge between one person and another. ²³And I will appoint one leader for them, someone who will be like King David, who served me very well. That leader will take care of them and be like their shepherd. ²⁴I, Yahweh, will be their God, and the one who is like King David will be their king. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

²⁵I will make a covenant with the people of Israel. I will promise to give them peace. I will promise to get rid of all the wild animals in Israel, in order that my people may live safely, even in the wilderness and in the forests. ²⁶I will bless them, and I will bless all the region close to Mount Zion, where they will worship me in my temple. I will bless them by sending them rain showers at the right season; they will be showers to bless them. ²⁷The fruit trees will produce fruit, and the ground will produce crops. And my people will live safely in their land. When I rescue them from people who made them slaves, they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

²⁸Soldiers from other nations will no longer take away their valuable possessions, and wild animals will no longer attack them. They will live safely, and no one will make them afraid. ²⁹I will cause their land to be peaceful and to produce good crops. There will no longer be famines in the land, and people in other nations will no longer mock them. ³⁰Then they will know that I, Yahweh their God, am helping them, and they will know that they, the Israelite people, are my people. ³¹It is as though you, my people, are my sheep whom I take care of, and I am your God. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.”

Chapter 35

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²“Son of man, turn toward Edom and prophesy what will happen to its people. Say this to them: ³You who live near Mount Seir in Edom, I am your enemy. I will use my power to strike you and ruin your country. ⁴I will destroy your cities, and everyone will leave them. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁵You have always been enemies of the Israelite people. You rejoiced when they experienced a great disaster, when their enemies attacked them, when I was punishing them most severely for the sins that they had committed.

⁶Therefore, I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, I will allow your enemies to slaughter you. They will attack you again and again. You enjoyed watching other people die, so I will slaughter you. ⁷I will therefore make everyone leave Mount Seir, and I will destroy anyone who enters it or leaves it. ⁸I will cause your mountains to be filled with the corpses of those who have been killed. The corpses of those whom your enemies have killed will lie on your hills, in your valleys, and in all your ravines. ⁹I will cause your land to be forever without people. No one will live in your towns again. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

¹⁰Your people said, ‘Israel and Judah will become ours. We will take over their territory!’ You said that even though I, Yahweh, was still there and protecting them. ¹¹Therefore, I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, I will punish you for being angry with my people, for envying them, and for hating them. And when I punish you, I will make sure that the Israelites know that it is I who have punished you. ¹²Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have heard all the disgusting things that you have said about the land of Israel; you said that the land was ruined, and that you could capture it for yourselves. ¹³You insulted me; I heard everything that you said about me. ¹⁴So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You people who live on Mount Seir and in all the other places in Edom, when I make everyone leave your land, everyone else in the world will rejoice. ¹⁵You were happy when the land of the Israelite people was ruined, so I will do the same thing to your land. When that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

Chapter 36

¹Yahweh said to Ezekiel, “Son of man, give a message to the hill country and mountains in Israel just as if they were people. Tell them to listen to my message for them. ²This is it: The enemies of Israel, those people groups who live nearby, are now very happy, because they are saying that Jerusalem has been destroyed, so the ancient mountains of Israel will now belong to them. ³So you, Ezekiel, must tell the mountains of Israel what I, the Lord Yahweh, am saying to them: ‘Armies of other nations attacked you from every direction, and everyone has left you. Those foreign armies are now in your land. They have spoken very maliciously about your people, the Israelites, and have told all kinds of lies about them. ⁴⁻⁶Therefore, you mountains of Israel, listen to this message from me. I, Yahweh the Lord, have something to say to you, the hills and mountains, and to you, the ravines and valleys, and to you, the towns and cities which the enemy burned down, where no one is living any longer, from where the enemy has taken everything valuable, and whose people the people groups all around are mocking. “This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare: I am very angry with the people of Edom and the other people groups; they have insulted your Israelite people and happily taken all their land as pastures. So Ezekiel must speak for me to you, the land of Israel, mountains and hills, valleys and ravines: I, Yahweh the Lord, am very angry because the enemy has insulted you.

⁷Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I solemnly declare I will shame the people of the nations that are around you.

⁸But I say to you mountains of Israel that huge crops of fruit will grow on your trees for my Israelite people, because they will soon return home from Babylonia. ⁹I will work to help you, and I will be kind to you. I will enable farmers to plow the ground and plant seed in you. ¹⁰I will cause the number of people who live there on you mountains and everywhere else in Israel to greatly increase. People will live in the cities and rebuild houses where there are now only ruins. ¹¹I will cause the number of people and domestic animals to increase. People will have many children. I will enable people to live there as they did previously, and I will enable them to prosper as they did before. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹²I will enable my Israelite people to walk through your mountains. They will own the land on you; you will belong to them forever. You will always grow enough food for them to eat, so they will never again go hungry and die.

¹³I, Yahweh the Lord, am telling you mountains this: It is true that people have said they could not grow many crops on you, and so they died from hunger. ¹⁴But that will no longer happen. ¹⁵No longer will the other people groups ridicule you mountains. No longer will they laugh at you; no longer will you mountains make your nation suffer defeat. I, the Lord Yahweh, am telling you this myself."

¹⁶Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁷"Son of man, when the Israelite people were living in their own land, they defiled it by the things that they did. They made it unacceptable to me. I considered that their behavior was as disgusting as the rags that women use during their monthly menstrual periods. ¹⁸So I severely punished them, because they had murdered many people and because they had worshiped idols there. They made their entire land unacceptable to me. ¹⁹So I made their enemies scatter them into other lands. I punished them as they deserved to be punished because they had done so many evil things. ²⁰Wherever they went among those lands, they caused other people to mock me, when they should have honored me. Those people have been saying, 'The Israelites belong to Yahweh, but he was not strong enough to protect them. They had to leave the land that he had given to them.' ²¹The people of Israel had disgraced me among the people groups to which they had to go, but I deserve that those people groups worship me instead.

²²So you, Ezekiel, say to the Israelite people that I, the Lord Yahweh, am telling them this: 'You Israelite people, it is not for your sake that I am going to rescue you from your enemies. Instead, I will do this so that the people in these other lands will worship me as God. You have done your best to disgrace me wherever you have gone. ²³I will show that these other people groups should worship me as God, even though they would never know it by watching how you act. When I prove to them that I am powerful and can do anything, then they will know that I will carry out everything that I say I will do. And they will see you honor me as the God who is holy.

²⁴I will take you out of those distant lands. I will gather you from all those places where you had to go, and I will bring you back to your own land. ²⁵It will be as though I will sprinkle clean water on you, and then you will be clean. I will make you clean from everything that has made me reject you, and I will cause you to stop worshiping idols. ²⁶I will give you a completely new way of thinking. I will enable you to stop being stubborn, and I will enable you to obey me from your inner beings. ²⁷I will put my Spirit within you and enable you to carefully obey all my laws. ²⁸You will again live in the land that I gave to your ancestors. You will be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹I will free you from everything that made me reject you. I will cause your grain to be plentiful, and I will not send a famine to you again. ³⁰I will cause your fruit trees to produce plenty of fruit and your ground to produce plenty of good crops, with the result that the people of other lands will not mock you because you do not have enough food. ³¹When that happens, you will think about your previous evil behavior and wicked deeds, and you will be very displeased with yourselves for your sins and the detestable things that you did. ³²But I, the Lord Yahweh, tell you this: It is not for your sake that I will do those things. You Israelite people ought to be ashamed of your behavior.

³³I, the Lord Yahweh, also tell you this: At the time that I cleanse you from all the sins that you have committed, I will enable you to live in your cities again and to build houses where there are now only ruins. ³⁴People who walk through your country will see that you are once again cultivating your land, and that your people are living in it again. ³⁵Then they will say, "This land that was ruined has become very fertile, like the garden of Eden. The cities

that were piles of ruins, empty and destroyed, now have houses around them, and people are living in those cities."

³⁶When that happens, the people who are still left in the lands that are around you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have enabled you to rebuild what was destroyed, and to again plant crops in the fields that had nothing growing in them. I, Yahweh, have said that it will happen, and I will cause it to happen.

³⁷This is also what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Again I will answer your pleas for me to make your people become as numerous as sheep. ³⁸I will make them as numerous as the flocks of sheep that will be needed for offerings in Jerusalem during your regular festivals. The cities that are now ruined will be filled with people, and then you will know that I, Yahweh, have done this."

Chapter 37

¹One day Yahweh gave me another vision. In the vision I felt the power of God on me, and by his Spirit he took me to the middle of a valley. It was full of bones of people who had been killed. ²He led me to walk back and forth among those bones. I saw that there were very many bones there, bones that were very dry. ³He asked me, "Son of man, do you think that these bones can become living people again?"

I replied, "Yahweh my Lord, only you know if that can happen."

⁴Then he said to me, "Speak a message for me to these bones. Say to them, 'You dry bones, listen to what Yahweh says. ⁵This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you bones: I am going to put my breath into each of you, and you will become alive again. ⁶I will fasten tendons to your bones and cause your bones to be covered with flesh. I will cover the flesh with skin. Then I will breathe into you, and you will become alive. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.'"

⁷So I spoke to the bones as Yahweh commanded me to speak. As I was speaking, there was a noise, a sound of shaking, and the bones came together, bones joining to each other. ⁸While I was looking, I saw tendons fastening to them and flesh covering them, and then skin covered the flesh, but they were not breathing.

⁹Then he said to me, "Son of man, speak a message for me to the wind. Say to the wind, 'Wind, Yahweh says to you, blow from all four directions. Breathe into these people who have been killed, in order that they can come alive again!'" ¹⁰So I said what he commanded me to say, and then breath entered them, and they began to breathe. They became alive and stood up, like a huge army.

¹¹Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent all the Israelite people. The people say, 'It is as though our bones are dried up; we can hope for nothing good any longer; our nation is destroyed.' ¹²So speak my message to them and say, 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: My people, it will be as though I will open your graves and cause your corpses to become alive again. I will bring you back to Israel. ¹³Then when that happens, you my people will know that I, Yahweh, have done this. ¹⁴I will put my spirit in you, and it will be as though you will become alive again, and I will enable you to live in your own land again. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who said that it would happen and who has caused it to happen. That is what I, Yahweh, declare.'"

¹⁵Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁶"Son of man, take a wooden stick and write on it, 'This represents Judah and all the tribes of Judah.' Then take another one and write on it, 'This represents Israel and all the tribes of Israel.' ¹⁷Then join them together to become as though they were one larger wooden stick in your hand.

¹⁸When your fellow Israelites ask you, 'What does this action mean?', ¹⁹tell them, 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: One of the pieces of wood in Ezekiel's hand represents Israel and all the tribes of Israel. I am joining it to the piece of wood that represents Judah, to form one stick in his hand.' ²⁰Then, Son of man, hold up the pieces of wood that you have written on, in order that the people can see them. ²¹Say to the people, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: I will take you Israelite people out of the countries to which you have been forced to go. I will gather you from all those lands, back to your own land. ²²And I will cause you to again be one nation in your land, on the mountains of Israel. And there will be one king to rule over all of you. Never again will you be two nations or divided into two

kingdoms. ²³No longer will you defile yourselves by worshiping idols and disgusting statues of your gods, because I will enable you to stop sinning and to stop rejecting me. You will be my people, and I will be your God.'

²⁴The king who rules over them will always come from the family of King David. David was the one who served me well. There will be one shepherd to watch over them and to take care of all of them. They will carefully obey all my laws. ²⁵They will live in the land that I gave to Jacob, who also served me well; they will live in the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren will live there forever, and the one who will be like King David will be their king forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant with them to give them peace; it will be a covenant that will last forever. I will give them that land again and cause their population to increase. And I will put my temple among them forever. ²⁷My home, where I will live, will be among them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. ²⁸Then, when my temple is there again among them, the people of nations will know that I, Yahweh, set apart Israel for my honor."

Chapter 38

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ²"Son of man, turn and face Magog, the country where Gog is the king. He is also the ruler of the nations of Meshech and Tubal. Announce my message about the terrible things that will happen to him. ³Say this: 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: Gog, you who rule Meshech and Tubal, I am your enemy. ⁴It will be as though I will turn you around and put hooks in your jaws and bring you to Israel—you and all of your army, including your horses and the men carrying weapons who ride those horses, and many other soldiers carrying large shields and small shields, all of them carrying swords. ⁵Your soldiers also include armies from Persia, Ethiopia, and Put, all of them with shields and helmets— ⁶also all the soldiers from Gomer and an army from Beth Togarmah—both of these lands that are far north of Israel. Armies of many nations will come with you.'

⁷Tell Gog this: 'Get ready, and be prepared to be the commander of all those soldiers. ⁸At some future time, Yahweh will command you to lead those armies to attack Israel, a country whose buildings have been rebuilt after they were destroyed in wars. Their people will have been brought back from many nations to live again on the hills of Israel, where no one had been living for a long time. Yahweh will bring the Israelites back from other lands, and they will be living peacefully. ⁹You and all those armies from many nations will go up to Israel, advancing like a great storm. Your army will be like a huge cloud that covers the land.

¹⁰But this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: On that day, you will plan to do something very evil. ¹¹You will say this to yourself: "My army will invade a country where the villages do not have walls around them. We will attack people who are peaceful and think that no one will harm them. Their towns and villages do not have walls with gates and bars. ¹²So it will be easy for us to attack these people. They are people who come back together from many countries where they had lived for many years, people who now live safely in their land with all their livestock and other possessions. They are living in the country that is in the middle of the most important countries in the world. Our soldiers will take away all their valuable possessions." ¹³Then people of Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish will come and say to you, "Are you gathering all your soldiers in order to attack Israel and take away all their silver and gold? Do you plan to take away their livestock and all their other valuable possessions?"

¹⁴Therefore, Son of man, take my message about Gog and say to him, 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: At that time, when my people of Israel are living safely, you will certainly think about them. ¹⁵You will come from your place far north of Israel, with the armies of many other nations, all riding horses, a huge army. ¹⁶You will march toward my Israelite people, and your soldiers will cover the land like a huge cloud. Gog, I will bring your army to attack the country that belongs to me, but what I will do to you will show the people of other nations that I am holy.

¹⁷This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to Gog: In past years, when I gave messages to my servants, the prophets in Israel, there were messages about you. At that time, they said for many years that I would bring your armies to attack my people. ¹⁸So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say will happen: When your army attacks Israel, I will be

very angry with you. ¹⁹I will be furious, and to show that I am angry, there will be a great earthquake in Israel, where your armies will be. ²⁰The fish in the sea, the birds, the wild animals, and the animals that crawl on the ground, and all the people on the earth will tremble because of what I will do. Mountains will fall down, cliffs will crumble, and walls everywhere will fall to the ground. ²¹Gog, on all the mountains in the country that belongs to me I will cause your soldiers to fight against each other. ²²I will punish you and your soldiers with plagues, and I will kill them. I will send down from the sky, on you and your troops who have come from many lands, huge amounts of rain, hail, and burning sulfur. ²³In this way, I will cause the people of many nations to know that I am very great, and I will show them my holiness. And they will see who I am and they will know that I am Yahweh.”

Chapter 39

¹Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, speak for me about the terrible things that will happen to Gog. Say this to him: ‘Gog, I am your enemy, you who rule Meshech and Tubal. ²I will turn you around and drag you and your armies from far north of Israel and send you to fight on the mountains of Israel. ³When you are there, I will snatch your bows from your left hands and cause your arrows to fall from your right hands. ⁴You and all the soldiers that are with you will die on the mountains of Israel. I will give your corpses to be food for the birds that eat dead flesh, and to the wild animals. ⁵You will die in the open fields. This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said that it will happen. ⁶I will cause many fires to burn in Magog and to all those who live safely in the areas along their coasts, and they will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁷I will enable my Israelite people to know that I am holy. I will no longer allow them to mock me, and the people groups in the other lands will know that I am Yahweh, the God whom Israel worships and honors. ⁸That day is fast approaching. I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that those things will happen soon.

⁹At that time, the people who live in the cities of Israel will go out and gather the weapons from the dead soldiers, and will use them to make fires to cook their food. They will burn the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs, and spears. There will be enough weapons to use as firewood for seven years. ¹⁰They will not need to gather firewood in the fields or cut wood from trees in the forests, because those weapons will be all the firewood that they will need. And they will take valuable things from those who took valuable things from them, and steal things from people who stole things from them. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare will happen.

¹¹At that time I will create a graveyard for you, Gog, and your soldiers, in the valley east of the Dead Sea. That graveyard will block the road that travelers usually walk on, because you, Gog and all the soldiers of your huge army will be buried there. So it will be named the Valley of Hamon Gog.

¹²For seven months the people of Israel will be burying your corpses. It will be necessary to bury all of them, in order that the land will not be defiled because of any unburied corpses. ¹³All the people of Israel will do the work of burying them. The day when I win that victory they will honor me, and they will remember that day forever.

¹⁴After those seven months are ended, the Israelite people will designate men to go throughout the land to bury any remaining corpses, in order that the land might not remain defiled. ¹⁵When they go through the land, whenever one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it. When the gravediggers see the markers, they will pick up the bones and bury them in the Valley of Hamon Gog. ¹⁶There will be a city there named Hamonah. And by doing this work of burying the corpses, they will cleanse the land.”

¹⁷Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, say: Summon every kind of bird and wild animal. Say to them, ‘Gather together from everywhere and come to the feast that Yahweh is preparing for you. It will be a great feast on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat men’s flesh and drink their blood. ¹⁸You will eat the flesh of strong soldiers and drink the blood of kings as if they were fat animals from the region of Bashan—as if they were male sheep, lambs, goats, and bulls. ¹⁹At the feast that Yahweh is preparing for you, you will eat fat until your stomachs are full, and you will drink blood until it is as though you are drunk. ²⁰It will be as though you are eating

at a table that I have set up for you. You will eat all you want of the flesh of horses and their riders, strong soldiers of every kind.' That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

²¹I will show people of the nations that I am powerful, and all the nations will see how I punish them. ²²At that time, the Israelite people will learn that I, Yahweh their God, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ²³And the people of the other lands will know that the Israelites had been forced to go to other countries because they sinned by not being faithful to me. I turned away from them, and I allowed their enemies to capture them and kill many of them. ²⁴I punished them as they deserved because of their disgusting behavior and sins, and I turned away from them.

²⁵Therefore, this is now what I, the Lord Yahweh say: I will now bring back from exile the descendants of Jacob; I will have mercy on all the Israelite people, and I will also make sure that they honor me. ²⁶When the Israelite people are back in their own country, they will live safely in their land, with no one to cause them to be afraid. They will forget about the disgraceful and unfaithful things that they did previously. ²⁷When I have brought them back from their enemies' countries and gathered them together in Israel, the people of many nations will know how holy I am because of what I did for my people. ²⁸The Israelite people will know that I, Yahweh, have done this. They will know that because I forced them to go to other countries, and then I gathered them together in their own country. I will not leave any of them in those countries. ²⁹I will no longer turn away from them; I will give my Spirit to the Israelite people. This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it."

Chapter 40

¹Almost twenty-five years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the tenth day of the first month of that year, almost fourteen years after Jerusalem had been destroyed, Yahweh grabbed hold of me with his power, and he took me in a vision to Israel. ²He set me on a very high mountain. On the south side of that mountain there were some buildings that looked like part of a city. ³When he took me there, I saw a man who looked as if he had been made of bronze. He was standing inside the city gate, and he was holding a linen cord and a measuring stick in his hand. ⁴He said to me, "Son of man, look carefully at everything that I am going to show you, and pay attention to everything that I say and everything that I will show you, because that is why God brought you here. And then later you must tell the Israelite people everything that you have seen here."

⁵In the vision I saw that there was a wall that completely surrounded the temple area. The measuring stick in the man's hand was three and one-tenth meters long. He measured the wall and it was three and one-tenth meters thick and three and one-tenth meters high.

⁶Then he went to the gate in the temple wall on the temple's east side. He climbed the steps and measured the gateway that faced outward; it was three and one-tenth meters deep. ⁷Next, there were alcoves for the temple guards, each being three and one-tenth meters long and deep. The distance of the wall between each alcove was two and three-quarters meters. The gateway that faced inward, which led to the temple portico, was also three and one-tenth meters deep.

⁸Then he measured the portico that was after the gate; it was three and one-tenth meters long. ⁹He also measured the depth, which was three and one-tenth of a meter. The doorposts on either side were one meter thick. This was the portico attached to the temple gate on the gate's inner side, facing the temple. ¹⁰Inside the east gate there were three alcoves for guards on each side of the gate. They all had the same length and depth. And the distance of wall between them was the same.

¹¹Then he measured the opening of the gate; it was five and two-fifths meters wide, and the entrance from the gate was seven meters long. ¹²Running along in front of the alcoves was a low wall one-half meter high. Each of the alcoves was three and one-tenth meters long on all sides. ¹³Then the man measured the gateway's width from the roof of the alcove on one side, to the roof of the alcove on the other side. The distance was 13 and one-half, from one alcove's entrance to that of the other. ¹⁴Then the man measured along the wall that separated the

alcoves from each other; it was thirty-two meters long. He measured them as far as the gate's portico. ¹⁵The distance from the entrance of the gate to the far end of its portico was twenty-seven meters. ¹⁶There were narrow windows in the walls of all the alcoves, and also in the inner walls between the alcoves. The portico also had these same windows on its inner side. The wall that ran between the alcoves was decorated with carvings of palm trees.

¹⁷Then the man brought me to the temple's outer courtyard. There I saw some rooms, and a stone pavement in the courtyard. There were thirty rooms facing the courtyard. ¹⁸The stone pavement was all around the courtyard, and it extended out from the walls into the courtyard for the same distance as the gate entrances. That was the lower pavement. ¹⁹Then the man measured the distance across the outer courtyard of the temple, between the outer gate and inner courtyard; it was fifty-four meters on the east side, and the same distance on the north side of the courtyard.

²⁰Then he measured how long and how wide was the gateway on the north side, which was an entrance into the outer courtyard of the temple complex. ²¹There were three alcoves for guards on each side of that gateway. From the gateway to the end of its portico was twenty-seven meters, and they were thirteen and one-half meters wide. ²²It had the same windows, portico, guard alcoves, and palm tree decorations as the east gate had. Like the east gate, there were seven steps leading up to it and its portico. ²³Across the outer courtyard from the north gate was a gate leading to the inner courtyard, just as there was on the east side. The man measured the distance from the north gate to the gate leading to the inner courtyard; it was fifty-four meters in distance.

²⁴Then he brought me through the south gateway into the inner courtyard, and he measured the entrance. It measured the same as the other gateways. Its alcoves, its walls between the alcoves, and its entry room measured the same as the ones on the other sides. ²⁵The gateway and its portico had narrow windows along the walls, as on the other sides. The gateway and its portico measured twenty-five meters long and thirteen and one-half wide. ²⁶There were seven steps leading up to that gate and its portico. It also had carvings of palm trees on the walls that were between the rooms. ²⁷Across the outer courtyard from the south gate was a gate opening onto the inner courtyard. The man measured from that gateway to the entrance on the south side of the outer courtyard; it was also fifty-four meters in distance.

²⁸Then the man brought me through the south entrance into the inner courtyard, and he measured the south entrance. It measured the same as the other gates. ²⁹He measured its alcoves, its walls, and its portico with the same measuring standards he had been using. The gate and its portico had windows all around. The gate and its portico measured twenty-seven meters long and thirteen and one-half wide. ³⁰The porticos of the inner gates, which led to the inner courtyard, were about thirteen and one-half meters long and two and three-quarters meters wide. ³¹The portico's entrance faced the outer courtyard. Carvings of palm trees decorated the walls, and there were eight steps leading up to it.

³²Then the man led me to the east side of the inner courtyard, and he measured the gate. It had the same measurements as the other gates. ³³Its alcoves, walls, and portico measured the same as the others. The gate and its portico had windows all around. The gate and its portico measured twenty-seven meters long and thirteen and one-half wide. ³⁴Its portico faced the outer courtyard. It also had carvings of palm trees decorating the walls, and it had eight steps leading up to it.

³⁵Then he led me to the entrance on the north side and measured it. It measured the same as the other entrances. ³⁶And its alcoves and walls between them and the entry room all had small windows in the walls. It all measured the same as the other gates. The gate and its portico measured twenty-seven meters long and thirteen and one-half meters wide. ³⁷Its portico faced the outer courtyard. It also had carvings of palm trees decorating the walls, and it had eight steps leading up to it.

³⁸In each of the inner entrances there was a room with a door. They were rooms where the carcasses of the animals that were to be completely burned on the altar were washed. ³⁹In each portico were four tables, two on each side. On those tables would be slaughtered the animals that were to be completely burned, also the animals for offerings of sins that people had committed, and offerings that acknowledged their guilt for having sinned

against other people. ⁴⁰Just outside the inner courtyard, to the left of the steps leading up to its north gate, there were two tables, and to the right of the steps were two more tables. ⁴¹There were four tables on the outer side of each inner courtyard gate, and there were also four tables on the inner side. The animals to be sacrificed were slaughtered on these tables. ⁴²There were also four tables of cut stone for the preparation of the offerings that were to be completely burned, four-fifths of a meter long on each side and one-half meter high. The priests would put on those stone tables the tools for slaughtering all the animals. ⁴³The meat for the offerings would be placed on those stone tables. There were hooks on which the meat was hung, each with two prongs, each eight centimeters long, fastened to the walls of the porticos.

⁴⁴Outside two of the inner gateways, on the inner courtyard side, there were rooms for those who led in singing during the worship, one on the north side and one on the south side. ⁴⁵The man said to me, "The room whose door faces south is for the priests who are working in the temple. ⁴⁶The room whose door faces north is for the priests who are in charge of the work at the altar. They are the descendants of Zadok; they are the only descendants of Levi who are permitted to approach Yahweh while they work for him."

⁴⁷Then he measured the courtyard; it was square, fifty-four meters long and fifty-four meters wide. The altar was in front of the sanctuary.

⁴⁸Then he brought me to the portico of the sanctuary and measured the doorposts and their walls on each side of the entrance; they were about two and three-quarters meters thick. The doorway was seven meters wide, and the sides on each side of it were one and three-fifths meters wide. ⁴⁹The portico was eleven meters wide, and its depth was six meters on each side. There were steps leading up to it, and there were columns on each side of the portico.

Chapter 41

¹Then in the vision the man brought me to into the holy place in the temple and measured the doorposts on either side of the entrance; they were each three and one-tenth meters wide. ²The entrance was five and two-fifths meters wide, and the walls of each side of it were two and three-quarters meters long. He also measured the holy place. It was twenty-two meters long and eleven meters wide.

³Then he entered the inner room of the temple, the very holy place, and measured the walls to either side of the entrance; each was one meter wide. The doorway was three and one-tenth meters wide, and each of the walls on each side of the entrance was three and four-fifths meters long. ⁴Then he measured the inner room; it was eleven meters long and eleven meters wide. Then he said to me, "This is the very holy place."

⁵Then he measured the wall of the temple; it was three and one-tenth meters thick. There was a row of rooms along the outside wall of the temple. Each of those rooms was two meters wide. ⁶There were three stories of rooms, with thirty rooms on each story. There were ledges all around the wall of the temple that were supports for the side rooms above. There were no extra supports built into the sanctuary wall. ⁷Each of the side rooms was wider than the one below it. The most narrow rooms were built first, at the bottom. Then a wider set of rooms was built over it, and the widest set was at the top. A set of stairs was built from the lowest level through the middle level to the highest level.

⁸I saw that there was a terrace around the temple. The terrace was the foundation for those side rooms; it was three and one-tenth meters high. ⁹The outer wall of those side rooms was two and three-quarters meters thick. All around the sanctuary there was an open area between those side rooms. ¹⁰The open areas were near the priests' rooms that were surrounding the courtyard; there was a distance of eleven meters between the two sets of side rooms all around the sanctuary. ¹¹There were two doors from those side rooms into another open area; one faced north and one faced south. This open area was two and three-quarters meters wide.

¹²There was a large building on the west side of the temple area. It was thirty-eight meters wide, and it had a wall two and three-quarters meters thick and forty-nine meters long.

¹³Then the man measured the temple. It was fifty-four meters long, and the temple courtyard, where the large building was, was fifty-four meters wide. The building and its wall measured the same. ¹⁴The courtyard on the east side of the temple, across the front of the temple, was also fifty-four meters wide.

¹⁵Then he measured the building on the west side. Including its walls, it was also fifty-four meters long.

The outer walls of the holy place, of the very holy place, and the portico, ¹⁶the inner walls above and below the narrow windows, and the galleries on all the stories—all these things were covered with thin panels of wood. ¹⁷All the walls inside the temple were decorated with carvings of winged creatures and palm trees; between each figure of a winged creature was a carving of a palm tree. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹Each winged creature had two faces. One face was the face of a human, and one was the face of a lion. Those figures were carved on the walls all around the inside of the temple, and each face looked at the carving of a palm tree. ²⁰They covered all the walls, from the floor to the wall above the entryway.

²¹At the entrance to the main room of the temple there were square doorposts, all the same in appearance. ²²In front of the very holy place there was a wooden altar. It was one and three-fifths meters high and one meter wide on all four sides. Its corners and base and sides were all made of wood. The man said to me, "This is the table that is in the presence of Yahweh." ²³The holy place and the very holy place had folding doors. ²⁴Each door consisted of two parts that swung on hinges. ²⁵On these doors there were carvings of winged creatures and palm trees. There was also a wooden roof over the front portico of the sanctuary. ²⁶On the side walls of the portico were narrow windows with figures of palm trees carved on the sides of the windows. The side rooms around the temple also had projecting roofs.

Chapter 42

¹Then in the vision the man led me out of the inner courtyard, through the gate on the north side. We entered the outer courtyard and came to rooms that were facing the northern outer wall. ²The building with those rooms was fifty-four meters long and twenty-seven meters wide. ³In that building there was one group of rooms that faced the inner courtyard. The distance between those rooms and the sanctuary, the main temple building, was eleven meters. These rooms were built on three stories. Each set of rooms had a walkway over the set of rooms below it. There were rooms that overlooked the open area of the outer courtyard. ⁴To one side of the rooms was a walkway that was five and two-fifths meters wide and fifty-four meters long. All the doors of the rooms were on their north side. ⁵Each set of rooms was narrower than the set of rooms below them, because each upper set had a walkway in front. ⁶The rooms on the upper levels had no pillars to support them as there were in the courtyard, because those rooms were supported by the walls of the rooms below. ⁷The outer wall ran parallel to the rooms that faced the outer courtyard; this part of the outer wall was twenty-seven meters long. ⁸The row of rooms that was along the outer courtyard was twenty-seven meters long, and the row of rooms that faced the temple was fifty-four meters long. ⁹The bottom story had an entrance on its east side, coming from the outer courtyard.

¹⁰On the eastern side, along the outer wall of the outer courtyard, next to the temple courtyard, there was also a set of rooms. ¹¹There was a walkway in front of them. These rooms were like the rooms on the north side. They had the same length and width, and also the same kind of entrances. ¹²There were also doorways into rooms on the south side that were similar to what was on the north side. There was an inside passage with an outer door; the passage had doors into all the rooms. At the east end of the passage was an outside door leading into it.

¹³Then the man said to me, "The rooms on the northern and southern sides that overlook the temple sanctuary are only for Yahweh's special purposes. Here the priests who offer sacrifices to Yahweh will eat their portions of those offerings. Because these rooms are special, they will be used to store the offerings for Yahweh: The flour for the flour offerings, for the offerings for the sins that people have committed, and for the offerings that people make for their sins. ¹⁴When the priests leave the temple, they will not be allowed to immediately enter the outer courtyard. First they must remove the clothes that they had been wearing inside the holy place, because those

clothes are special, reserved for their work. They must put on other clothes before they enter the parts of the temple area where the other people gather.”

¹⁵When the man had finished measuring the inside of the temple area, he led me out through the east entrance and measured all the surrounding area. ¹⁶⁻¹⁹He measured the four sides of the area. There was a wall around the area that was two-hundred and seventy meters long on each side. ²⁰He measured the wall that separated what was sacred from the areas that were not sacred on four sides. The wall was five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide.

Chapter 43

¹Then the man brought me to the entrance on the east side. ²Suddenly I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. The sound of his coming was like the roar of a rushing river, and all that area shone with his glory. ³What I saw in this vision was like what I had seen in my earlier visions, first by the Kebar Canal and later when God came to destroy Jerusalem. I prostrated myself on the ground. ⁴The glory of Yahweh entered the temple through the east entrance, ⁵and then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner courtyard, while the glory of Yahweh filled the temple.

⁶Then, while the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speak to me from inside the temple. ⁷He said, “Son of man, this is my temple, the place where I sit on my throne and where I rest my feet. This is where I will live with the Israelite people forever. The Israelite people and their kings will never again disgrace me by worshiping other gods at their hilltop places of idol worship, or by building lifeless idols of their past kings. ⁸Your people placed their altars near mine, and the doorposts of their temples were next to the doorposts of my temple. There was only a wall between them. And they disgraced me by the detestable things that they did. So I was angry and destroyed them. ⁹Now they must stop this disgusting worship of idols and these rituals to honor kings’ idols. If they stop doing those things, I will live among them forever.

¹⁰Son of man, describe to the Israelite people what this temple that I have shown you in a vision is like, in order that they will be ashamed of the sins. ¹¹If they are ashamed of all the evil things that they have done, tell them all about the temple that I showed you: Its design, the exits and entrances, and everything else about it. And tell them all my laws and regulations about worshiping me there. Write all these things down while they watch you, in order that they will be able to faithfully obey them.

¹²And this is the supreme law about the temple: All of the area on top of the hill where the temple will be built must be kept sacred and holy.

¹³These are the measurements of the altar, using the same kind of measuring stick that was used for the temple area: There is a gutter around the altar that is one-half meter deep and one-half meter wide. There is a rim around it that is twenty-three centimeters wide. This will compose the base for the rest of the altar. ¹⁴The lower part of the gutter is one meter high to the lower ledge that surrounds the altar. The lower ledge is one-half meter wide. From that ledge to the upper ledge, it is two meters. That ledge is also one-half meter wide. ¹⁵The hearth at the top of the altar is another two meters high, and there is a hornlike projection that juts up from each of the four corners. ¹⁶That place at the top of the altar is square, six and one-half meters long on each side. ¹⁷The upper ledge that borders the hearth is also a square, seven and three-fifths meters long on each side, and has a rim all around that is twenty-seven centimeters wide. There is a gutter measuring one-half meter at the bottom of the altar. There are steps leading up to the east side of the altar.”

¹⁸Then the man said to me, “Son of man, this is what Yahweh the Lord says: These are the regulations for sacrificing offerings that will be completely burned and for sprinkling the blood against the sides of the altar when it is built: ¹⁹You must present to the priests a young bull to be an offering for the sins of the priests, the descendants of Levi, from the clan of Zadok, who come near to the altar to serve me. ²⁰You must take some of the blood from the bull and smear it on the four projections of the altar and on the four corners of the upper ledge,

and all around the rim, so I will accept the altar, and to make the altar belong only to me. ²¹You must burn that bull outside the temple in the part of the temple area designated for that purpose.

²²The next day you must offer a male goat that has no defects, to be an offering, so I will accept the altar. Then you must purify the altar again, as you did with the bull that was sacrificed. ²³When you have finished doing all that, you must offer a young bull and a ram, both of them without any defects. ²⁴You must offer them to me, Yahweh. The priests must sprinkle salt on them and burn them completely on the altar as a sacrifice to me.

²⁵Then, each day for seven days you must bring to the priest a male goat to be sacrificed for an offering, so I will accept the altar. You must also sacrifice a young bull and a ram, each without any defect, that the priests will provide. ²⁶For seven days the priests will consecrate the altar, so I will accept the altar. By doing that they will set it apart for my honor. ²⁷At the end of those seven days, starting on the following day, the priests will continue to put on the altar offerings to be completely burned and offerings to promise friendship with me. Then I will accept you. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare."

Chapter 44

¹Then the man brought me back to the outer entrance to the temple area, the one on the east side, but the gate was shut. ²Yahweh said to me, "This gate must remain shut. It must not be opened by anyone; no one will be permitted to enter it. It must remain shut because I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, made it to be special to me when I came in through it. ³Only the ruler of Israel will be permitted to sit inside this entrance to eat food in my presence. He must enter and leave the temple area through this gate."

⁴Then the man brought me through the north entrance to the front of the temple. I looked and saw that the glory of Yahweh filled his temple, and I prostrated myself on the ground.

⁵Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, look carefully, and listen carefully to everything that I tell you about all the regulations concerning the temple. Note carefully the temple entrance and all the exits. ⁶Say this to the rebellious Israelite people: 'This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You Israelite people, I will no longer endure the detestable things that you do! ⁷In addition to all the other detestable things that you do, you brought into my temple foreign men who had not been circumcised and who knew nothing about how to honor me. By doing that, you caused my temple to be an unacceptable place to worship me, while you offered food and fat and blood, and you disobeyed my covenant with you. ⁸Instead of doing what I commanded you to do in regard to my holy things, you appointed foreigners to be in charge of my temple. ⁹But this is what I, Yahweh, have said: No foreigners, no men who are not circumcised, no godless people are permitted to enter my temple, not even foreigners who live among you Israelites permanently.

¹⁰Many of the descendants of Levi deserted me along with most of the Israelite people, and started to worship idols. I will punish them for their sin. ¹¹I will permit them to work in my temple and to be in charge of the temple gates. They will be able to slaughter the animals that will be completely burned on the altar, and to burn other sacrifices for the people, and they will be able to help the people. ¹²But because they helped the people to worship idols and caused many of the people of Israel to sin by worshiping idols, I swear that I will punish them for their sin. ¹³They must not come near me to serve as priests. They must not come near any sacred things or the holy offerings. They will be ashamed of the things that they did, of which they are guilty. ¹⁴But I will still put them in charge of the work in the temple, and allow them to do all the work that needs to be done there.

¹⁵But the priests who are descended from Levi and from the clan of Zadok faithfully worked in my temple when the other Israelites deserted me. So they must come near to me to work for me. They will stand in my presence to offer sacrifices of animals' fat and blood. ¹⁶They are the only ones who are permitted to enter my temple. They are the only ones who are permitted to come near my altar to serve me and do what I tell them to do.

¹⁷When they enter the gateway into the inner courtyard, they must wear white linen clothes. They must not wear any clothes made of wool while they do their work at the gates of the inner courtyard or inside the temple. ¹⁸They must wear white linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that would cause them to perspire. ¹⁹Before they go out into the courtyard where other people are, they must take off the clothes that they have been wearing and leave them in the sacred rooms, and put on other clothes, in order that the people are not consecrated by touching the sacred clothes.

²⁰The priests must not shave their heads or let their hair become long; but they must keep their hair trimmed.

²¹Priests must not drink wine before they enter the inner courtyard. ²²Also, priests must not marry widows of men who were not priests or women who have been divorced. They are permitted to marry only virgins or widows of other priests. ²³They must teach the people the difference between things that are holy and things that are not, and teach them how to know what things are acceptable to me and what things are not.

²⁴If there is a dispute between people, the priests are the ones who must serve as judges and decide matters according to my laws. They must obey all my laws and decrees concerning the sacred festivals, and they must treat my Sabbath days as special for me.

²⁵Priests are permitted to go near the corpse of a father or mother or son or daughter or brother or unmarried sister. But they must not defile themselves by going near a corpse of anyone else. ²⁶If a priest touches the corpse of a close relative, he must perform the rituals to become acceptable to serve me again. After he performs those rituals, he must wait seven days. ²⁷Then, on the day that he enters the inner courtyard again to serve me in the temple, he must give an offering to remove his guilt for having sinned. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

²⁸The priests will not own any land. They will have only what I provide for them. ²⁹They will eat the offerings made from flour, offerings to remove people's guilt for having sinned, and offerings made when people fail to give to me the things that they are required to give. Everything else in Israel that is dedicated to me will belong to the priests.

³⁰The best fruits of the first part of each harvest and all the other special gifts will belong to the priests. You must give them the first part of your ground flour, in order that I will bless the people who live in your house. ³¹Priests must not eat the flesh of any bird or animal that is found dead or that has been killed by wild animals.

Chapter 45

¹When the land of Israel is divided among the twelve tribes, you must present to Yahweh one part of the land to be a sacred district. It will be thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide. This entire area will be reserved for Yahweh. ²Part of that area, a square about 270 meters long on each side will be left empty all around the temple area. An additional strip of ground, about twenty-seven meters wide, will be left empty all around the temple area. ³Inside the sacred district, measure a section thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide. It will be where the sanctuary is, and that is the most holy place. ⁴It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests who work in the temple, those who come near to Yahweh to serve him. It will be a place very special for Yahweh, for the priests' houses, as well as for the temple. ⁵An area thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide will be for the descendants of Levi who work in the temple. That area will belong to them, and they can build towns there to live in.

⁶Alongside this sacred area will be a section of land that is thirteen and one-half kilometers long and two and three-quarters kilometers wide. It will be for a city where anyone in Israel may live.

⁷The ruler of Israel will have the land that is on each side of the area formed by the temple district and the city. It will extend to the west from the western end of those areas, and to the east from the eastern end of those areas. The far eastern and far western borders of the king's land will measure the same as the parallel borders of those other tracts. ⁸This portion of land will belong to the ruler. So the rulers will no longer have any excuse for oppressing my people and stealing their land. They will assign the remaining parts of the land in Israel to each tribe, to be divided up among the people.

⁹This is what Yahweh the Lord says: You rulers of Israel must stop acting violently and oppressing the people! You must do what is fair and right. Stop taking land from the people; stop forcing them off their land! ¹⁰Also, you must use accurate scales and accurate containers for measuring things. ¹¹The baskets for measuring dry things and containers for measuring liquids must be the same size; each must hold twenty-two liters—called an ephah (for dry measure) and a bath (for liquid measure). ¹²When you weigh things, you must use weights that everyone accepts as being correct. The shekel is to be divided into twenty gerahs, and a mina will be worth sixty shekels.

¹³You must present to the ruler one measure of wheat or barley for every sixty measures that you harvest. ¹⁴You must give him one measure of olive oil for every one hundred measures that you produce. ¹⁵Also, Yahweh declares that you must take one sheep or goat from every two hundred in your flocks in the lush pastures of Israel. You must offer a sheep or a goat for various offerings: Burnt offerings and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh, offerings to atone for the people's sins. "This is the Lord Yahweh's command." ¹⁶All the people in the land must join in bringing these offerings to the ruler of Israel. ¹⁷The ruler must provide the animals to be completely burned on the altar, flour for the offerings made from grain, and wine for the sacred festivals that Yahweh has appointed for the people Israel—including the festivals to celebrate the new moons, and the offerings for the Sabbath days. He must provide the animals for the offerings for the people to become acceptable to God, offerings of flour made from grain, offerings to be completely burned, and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh, to atone for the sins of the people of Israel."

¹⁸This is also what the Lord Yahweh declares: "On the first day of the first month of each year you must take one young bull that has no defects and sacrifice it to purify the temple. ¹⁹The priest must take some of the blood of the offering to atone for the people's sins, and he must smear it on the temple doorposts, on the four corners of the upper ledge surrounding the altar, and on the gateposts of the inner courtyard. ²⁰You must do the same thing on the seventh day of the month for any people who sin accidentally or without knowing that they sinned. By doing that you will purify the temple.

²¹In the first month of each year, on the fourteenth day of the month, you must start to celebrate the Passover festival. The festival will last for seven days. During that time you must not eat any bread made with yeast. ²²On the first day, the ruler must provide a bull as an offering for himself and for the other people of the country. ²³And every day during those seven days he must provide seven bulls and seven rams that have no defects, to be an offering to make it possible for Yahweh to accept the people. ²⁴He must also provide twenty-two liters of flour as an offering with each bull, and the same amount of flour with each ram, and also four liters of olive oil with each offering of flour.

²⁵During the seven days of the festival celebrating when the Israelites lived in tents during the exodus from Egypt, which starts on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of each year, the ruler must provide the same things for offerings to make it possible for God to accept the people, for offerings to be completely burned, for offerings of things made from grain, and for offerings of olive oil.

Chapter 46

¹This is also what Yahweh the Lord declares: 'The east gateway of the inner courtyard must be shut during the six days you work each week, but on the Sabbath days and on the days when there is a new moon, the gateway must be open. ²The ruler must enter the courtyard through the entry room of the gateway, and stand alongside the gateposts of the inner courtyard. Then the priests must sacrifice the animal that will be completely burned on the altar, and also his offering to promise friendship with me. The ruler must worship me at the entrance of the inner gateway, and then he must leave. But the gate will not be shut until that evening. ³On the Sabbath days and on the days when there is a new moon, the people also must worship me at the entrance of this gate. ⁴The offering that the ruler brings to be completely burned on the Sabbath day must be six male lambs and one ram, all with no defects. ⁵The offering that he gives with the ram is twenty-two liters of flour, and the flour that he offers with the lambs should be as much as he pleases, along with one liter of olive oil for every twenty-two liters of flour. ⁶Then each day that there is a new moon, he must offer a young bull, six lambs and a ram, all with no defects. ⁷He must

also provide twenty-two liters of flour with the bull, the same amount of flour with the ram, and as much flour as he wants with the lambs, along with one liter of olive oil with every twenty-two liters of flour. ⁸When the ruler enters the temple area, he must enter through gate and its entry room, and he must go out by the same way.

⁹When the people come to worship me at the festivals that I, Yahweh, have commanded, those who enter the temple area through the north gateway must go out through the south gateway. And those who enter through the south gateway must go out through the north gateway. People must not go out through the gateway through which they entered; they must go out through the opposite gateway. ¹⁰The ruler must go in when the other people go in, and go out when the people go out.

¹¹During the festivals that you hold for me, the king must present twenty-two liters of flour along with a bull or a ram, and as much flour as he wants to with the lambs, along with one liter of olive oil with every twenty-two liters of flour. ¹²When the ruler gives an offering that is not required, either one to be completely burned or an offering to celebrate fellowship with me, the gate on the east side must be opened for him. He must then present his offerings like he does on the Sabbath days. Then he will go out, and after he goes out, they must shut the gateway.

¹³In the morning of every day, someone must provide a one year old lamb with no defects to be an offering to me, one that the priests will completely burn. ¹⁴Someone must also provide each morning an offering of flour. It must be three and one-half liters of flour mixed with one liter of olive oil. You must never stop presenting these offerings of flour and olive oil to me, Yahweh, each day. ¹⁵The lamb and the offering of flour and olive oil must be presented to me every morning, to be completely burned on the altar.

¹⁶This is what Yahweh the Lord declares: If the ruler gives some of his land to one of his sons, to belong to him permanently, it will then eventually belong to his son's descendants. ¹⁷However, if he gives some of his land to one of his servants, the servant is allowed to keep that land until the year of the celebration of Jubilee. Then the ruler must take possession of it again. But if the ruler gives land to his sons, that land will belong to them permanently. ¹⁸The ruler must not take any land that the people own and force them to live somewhere else. The land that he gives to his sons must be from his own property, not from anyone else's property, in order that none of my people will be separated from his own property."

¹⁹Then, in the vision, the man brought me through the entrance alongside the gateway to the sacred rooms on the north side, the rooms that belonged to the priests, and he showed me a place at the western end. ²⁰He said to me, "This is the place where the priests will cook the meat of the offerings that people make because they failed to do what they promised Yahweh that they would do, and offerings to cause people to become acceptable to God, and where they will bake bread made with the flour brought as offerings. They will cook those things in their rooms in order to avoid bringing them into the outer courtyard to cook them there, lest someone might be consecrated by touching them."

²¹Then the man brought me to the outer courtyard and led me around to its four corners. In each corner I saw an enclosed area; ²²each was twenty-two meters long and sixteen meters wide. ²³Around the inside of each of these enclosed areas was a stone ledge, with places to make fires all around under the ledge. ²⁴The man said to me, "These are the kitchens where the descendants of Levi who work in the temple will cook the sacrifices that the people bring."

Chapter 47

¹Then in the vision, the man brought me back to the entrance of the temple. There I saw water coming out from under the entrance and flowing toward the east. The water was flowing down the south side of the entrance, to the right of the altar. ²Then he brought me out through the north gate and led me around to the eastern gate at its exterior side.

³As the man continued walking toward the east, I saw that he had a measuring line in his hand. He measured off 540 meters and then led me through water that covered my ankles. ⁴Then he measured off another 540 meters

and led me through water that was up to my knees. Then he measured off another 540 meters and led me through water that was up to my waist. ⁵Then he measured off another 540 meters and led me through water that was now a river that I could not cross, because the water was so deep; to continue farther would have required me to swim. ⁶Then he asked me, "Son of man, think about this carefully." Then he led me onto the bank of the river

⁷and back along it toward in the direction from where we had come. There I saw many trees growing on each side of the river. ⁸He said to me, "This water flows east and goes down into the Dead Sea. And when the water enters the Dead Sea, it stays fresh and restores the water of the Sea and makes it fresh again. ⁹Swarms of fish will live in the water wherever the river flows. There will be many fish in the Dead Sea, because the water that flows into it will cause the salt water to become fresh water. Wherever the river flows, everything alongside it will flourish.

¹⁰Fishermen will stand along the riverbank to catch fish. From En Gedi on the western side to En Eglaim there will be places to spread fishing nets. There will be many kinds of fish, as there are in the Great Sea. ¹¹But the swamps and marshes along the shore will not become fresh; they will be left to make salt. ¹²Many kinds of fruit trees will grow on both sides of the river. Their leaves will not wither, and they will always have fruit. They will bear new fruit every month, because the water that comes from the temple flows continually to the trees. Their fruit will be good to eat and their leaves will be good for healing."

¹³In the vision, Yahweh also said this to me: "Here is a list of the twelve tribes of Israel and the territory that each tribe is to receive. The descendants of Joseph will receive two portions. ¹⁴Divide the land equally among all of the tribes. I lifted up my hand to swear to your ancestors that I would give them this land to own permanently.

¹⁵These will be the boundaries of the land:

On the north side, it will extend from the Mediterranean Sea east along the road to Hethlon, and then on to Zedad,

¹⁶to Berothah, and then on to Sibraim, which is on the border between Damascus and Hamath. The boundary will run as far as Hazer Hattikon, which is on the border of the region of Hauran. ¹⁷So the boundary will extend from the Mediterranean Sea to Hazar Enan on the border between Hamath to the north and Damascus to the south. That will be the northern boundary.

¹⁸On the east side, the boundary will extend between Hauran and Damascus, south along the Jordan River between the region of Gilead and the territory of Israel, along the Dead Sea as far as Tamar. That will be the eastern boundary.

¹⁹On the south side, the boundary will extend from Tamar to the springs near Meribah Kadesh. Then it will extend west along the brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. That will be the southern boundary.

²⁰On the west side, the boundary will be the Mediterranean Sea, north to a point near Lebo Hamath.

²¹You must distribute this land among yourselves, among the tribes of Israel. ²²You must assign the land as a permanent possession for yourselves and also for any foreigners who are living and raising their children among you. You must consider them to be like native born Israelites, and they must be assigned land among the tribes of Israel. ²³Wherever foreigners are living, you must give them some land to belong to them permanently.' That is what the Lord Yahweh declares."

Chapter 48

¹Here is a list of the tribes of Israel and the territory that each tribe is to receive. The northern boundary of Israel will start at the Mediterranean Sea and go east to the city of Hethlon, then to Lebo Hamath, and farther on to Hazar Enan, which is south of Damascus, and it will continue to Hamath. Each tribe will receive land that will extend from the eastern boundary of Israel west to the Great Sea.

The tribe of Dan will receive land alongside the northern border of Israel.

²South of their area will be the territory for the tribe of Asher.

³South of Asher's land will be territory for the tribe of Naphtali.

⁴South of Naphtali's land will be territory for the tribe of Manasseh.

⁵South of Manasseh's land will be territory for the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶South of Ephraim's land will be territory for the tribe of Reuben.

⁷South of their land will be territory for the tribe of Judah.

⁸South of Judah's land will be an area that the entire nation will give to me; you will set it apart for special use. The temple will be in the center of this area. It will be as long as any of the portions of land assigned a tribe of Israel.

⁹This special area will be thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide. This is what you will give to Yahweh. ¹⁰Within this special area, these will what you will assign to the priests: you will assign them an area of land measuring thirteen and one-half kilometers on the northern and southern side; and five and two-fifths kilometers on the western and eastern sides. The temple of Yahweh will be in the middle of this special area. ¹¹The temple area will be for the priests, those set apart for my honor, who are descendants of Zadok. They are ones who served me faithfully and did not turn away from Yahweh as the descendants of Levi did. ¹²When the land is distributed, you will offer that special area to me, for it to be the priests' special portion; it is land that you will treat as very special to me. Next to the priests' territory will be where the other descendants of Levi will live.

¹³The land that you will assign to the descendants of Levi will be the same size as the land that the priests will receive. So together, these two portions of land will be thirteen and one-half kilometers long and about eleven kilometers wide. ¹⁴None of this special land, this best land, may ever be sold or traded or used by other people, because it belongs to Yahweh. It is set apart for him.

¹⁵Another strip of land thirteen and one-half kilometers long and about two and three-quarters kilometers wide will be allotted for other people living in the special area to use. There they may build homes and have pasturelands, and there will be a city in the middle of this area. ¹⁶The city will be square, two and two-fifths kilometers long on each side. ¹⁷There will be an open area around the city, within the special area, that will be about 135 meters deep in each direction. ¹⁸Outside the city there will be a farming area that will extend five and two-fifths kilometers on the east side and five and two-fifths kilometers on the west side. Men who work there will produce food for the people who work in the city. ¹⁹Those who come from the various tribes to work in the city may also work in this farmland. ²⁰This entire special area, including the land given for Yahweh's use and the city, will be a square that is thirteen and one-half kilometers long on each side.

²¹The tracts of land to the east and to the west of Yahweh's area and the city will belong to the ruler. One area will extend east to the eastern boundary of Israel, and the other will extend west to the Great Sea. Yahweh's area, which contains the temple, will be in the middle. ²²The area that belongs to the ruler will be between the tribe of Judah to the north and the tribe of Benjamin to the south.

²³South of Yahweh's area, each of the other tribes will receive one portion of land that extends from the eastern boundary of Israel west to the Great Sea.

Just south of Yahweh's area will be territory for the tribe of Benjamin.

²⁴South of Benjamin's land will be the land for the tribe of Simeon.

²⁵South of Simeon's land will be the land for the tribe of Issachar.

²⁶South of Issachar's land will be the land for the tribe of Zebulun.

²⁷South of Zebulun's land will be the land for the tribe of Gad.

²⁸The southern boundary of Gad's land will extend south from En Gedi to the springs at Meribah Kadesh, and then to the west along the brook of Egypt to the Great Sea.

²⁹This is a description of the land that you must assign to the tribes of Israel, for it to belong to them permanently.' That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

³⁰Here are the city gates: On the north side, which is two and two-fifths kilometers long, ³¹there will be three gates. Each gate will have the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The first one will be named for Reuben, the next for Judah, the next for Levi.

³²On the east side, also two and two-fifths kilometers long, will be gates named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan.

³³On the south side, also two-fifths of a kilometer long, will be gates named for Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun.

³⁴On the west side, also two-fifths of a kilometer long, will be gates named for Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.

³⁵The distance around the city would be nine and three-quarters kilometers.

From that time on, the name of the city will be "Yahweh is there."

Daniel

Chapter 1

¹After King Jehoiakim had been ruling in Judah for almost three years, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem with his army and surrounded the city. ²After two years, the Lord allowed Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers to capture Jehoiakim, who was the King of Judah. They also took some of the things that were in the temple of God, and took them to Babylonia. There Nebuchadnezzar put them in the temple of his god.

³Then Nebuchadnezzar commanded Ashpenaz, the chief official in his palace, to bring to him some of the Israeli men whom they had brought to Babylon. He wanted men who belonged to important families, including the family of the king of Judah. ⁴King Nebuchadnezzar wanted only men who were very healthy, handsome, wise, well-educated, capable of learning many things, and suitable for working in the palace. He also wanted to teach them the Babylonian language and have them read things that had been written in the Babylonian language. ⁵The king commanded his servants, "Give them the same kind of food and wine that is given to me. Train them for three years. Then they will become my servants."

⁶Among the young Israeli men who were chosen were me, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who all came from Judah. ⁷But Ashpenaz gave us Babylonian names. The name he gave to me was Belteshazzar, the name he gave to Hananiah was Shadrach, the name he gave to Mishael was Meshach, and the name he gave to Azariah was Abednego.

⁸But I decided that I would not eat the kind of food that the king ate, or drink the wine that he drank, because that would make me ritually defiled. So I asked Ashpenaz to allow me to eat and drink other things. ⁹God had caused Ashpenaz to greatly respect me, ¹⁰but he was worried about what I suggested. He said, "My master, the king, has commanded that you eat the kinds of food and drink that he does. If you eat other things and as a result you become more thin and pale than the other young men who are your age, he will order his soldiers to cut off my head because of what you have done!"

¹¹Ashpenaz had ordered a guard to watch me, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ¹²So I said to this guard: "Please test us for ten days. During that time give us only vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³After ten days, see how we look, and see how the other young men look, the ones who are eating the kind of food that the king eats. Then you can decide about what food you will let us eat." ¹⁴The guard agreed to do what I suggested, and he tested us like that for ten days.

¹⁵After ten days, he saw that I and my three friends looked to be more healthy than the young men who had been eating the food that the king wanted them to eat. ¹⁶So after that, the guard gave us only vegetables to eat; he did not give us the king's special food and wine.

¹⁷And God gave to us four young men wisdom and the ability to study many things that Babylonians had written and studied. And he also gave to me the ability to understand the meaning of visions and dreams.

¹⁸When those three years that the king had set for training us young men from Judah were ended, Ashpenaz brought all of us to King Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹The king talked with each of us, and realized that none of the other young men were as capable as I, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were. So we four became the king's special advisors. ²⁰In all important matters which the king inquired of us, he found that what we four men advised was ten times as good as what all the magicians and sorcerers in his kingdom advised.

²¹I remained there serving the king more than sixty years, until the first year that Cyrus became king.

Chapter 2

¹One night during the second year that Nebuchadnezzar ruled, he had a dream. The dream worried him very much; and as a result he could not sleep. ²The next morning he summoned his men who worked magic, fortune-tellers, those who worked sorcery, and those who studied the stars. Because he had forgotten what he had dreamed, he insisted that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood there in front of the king, ³he said, "I had a dream last night that worries me. Tell me what I dreamed, because I want to know what the dream means."

⁴The men who studied the stars replied to the king, speaking in the Aramaic language. They said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we hope that you will live a long time! Tell us what you dreamed, and then we will tell you what it means!"

⁵But the king replied to them, "I have firmly decided that you must tell me the dream, and also tell me what it means. If you do not do that, I will order my soldiers to cut you into pieces, and to cause your houses to become only piles of stones! ⁶But if you tell me what I dreamed and what it means, I will reward you. I will give you wonderful gifts and greatly honor you. So tell me what I dreamed and what it means!"

⁷But again they replied, "Tell us what you dreamed, and then we will tell you what it means."

⁸The king replied, "I know that you are just trying to get more time, because you know that I will do to you what I said that I would do. ⁹If you do not tell me what I dreamed, you will be punished. I think that you have all agreed to tell me lies and other wicked things, because you hope that I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I will know that you can also tell me what it means."

¹⁰The men who studied the stars replied to the king, "There is no one on the earth who can do what you ask! There is no king, even a great and mighty king, who has ever asked his men who work magic or his fortune-tellers or men who study the stars to do something like that! ¹¹What you are asking us to do is impossible. Only the gods can tell you what you dreamed, and they do not live among us!"

¹²The king was very angry when he heard that, so he commanded his soldiers that they execute all such wise men in Babylon. ¹³And because of what the king commanded, they sent some men to find me and my three friends, to execute us also.

¹⁴Arioeh, the commander of the king's guards, came to kill us. But I spoke to him very wisely and tactfully. ¹⁵I asked Arioeh, "Why has the king made such a harsh decree?" So Arioeh told me all that had happened because of the king's dream. ¹⁶I immediately went to talk to the king and requested that king give me some time, so that I could find out what the dream was and what the dream meant.

¹⁷Then I went home, and I told my friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, what had happened. ¹⁸I urged them to ask God, who lives in heaven, to act mercifully toward us by telling us the secret meaning of what the king dreamed, in order that we and the other wise men in Babylon would not be executed. ¹⁹And that night God gave to me a vision in which he revealed the secret. Then I praised God, ²⁰saying,

"We should praise God forever,

because only he truly is wise and powerful.

²¹He determines what events will happen through the years.

He removes some kings and gives their authority to new kings.

He gives wisdom to some, and people become wise.

He is the one who causes people to become wise and enables those who study to understand many things.

²²He reveals things that are very mysterious;

he is surrounded by light but he knows things that are hidden
as though they were in the darkness.

²³God, whom my ancestors worshiped,
I thank you and I praise you,
because you have caused me to be wise and made me strong.
You have told me what my friends and I asked you to tell us;
and you have revealed to us what the king demanded to know."

²⁴Then I went to Arioch, the man whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men in Babylon. I said to him, "Do not kill those wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him what his dream means."

²⁵So Arioch quickly took me to the king. He said to the king, "I have found one of the men whom we brought from Judah who says he can tell you what your dream means!"

²⁶The king said to me, whose new name was Belteshazzar, "Is this true? Can you tell me what I dreamed and what it means?"

²⁷I replied, "There are no wise men or fortune-tellers or men who work magic or men who work sorcery who can tell such things to you. ²⁸But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets. And he has shown in your dream what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you what you dreamed, and the vision you saw as you were lying on your bed.

²⁹O King, while you were sleeping, you dreamed about events that will happen in the future. The one who reveals mysteries has shown you what is going to happen. ³⁰And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else on earth that I know the meaning of this mysterious dream. It is because God wanted you to understand what you were thinking.

³¹O King, in your vision you saw in front of you a huge and terrifying statue of a man. It was shining very brightly, and it was frightening and awesome. ³²The head of the statue was made of pure gold. Its chest and arms were made of silver. Its belly and thighs were made of bronze. ³³Its legs were made of iron, and its feet were a mixture of clay and iron. ³⁴As you watched, something cut a rock from a mountain, but it was not a human who cut it. The rock tumbled down and smashed the feet of the statue, feet that were made of iron and clay. It smashed them to bits. ³⁵Then the rest of the statue collapsed into a big heap of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. The pieces of the statue were as small as bits of chaff on the ground where it is threshed, and the wind blew away all the tiny pieces. There was nothing left. But the rock that smashed the statue became a large mountain that covered the whole earth.

³⁶That was what you dreamed. Now I will tell you what it means. ³⁷You are a king who rules over many other kings. The God who rules in heaven has caused you to rule over them and has given you great power and has honored you. ³⁸He has caused you to be the ruler over all people, and even the animals and birds are controlled by you. So the head of the statue represents you.

³⁹But after your kingdom ends, there will be another great kingdom, but it will not be as great as yours. The silver parts of the statue represent that kingdom. Then there will be a third great kingdom whose king will rule over the whole earth. The bronze parts of the statue represent that kingdom. ⁴⁰After that kingdom ends, there will be a fourth great kingdom. The iron parts of the statue represent that kingdom. The army of that kingdom will smash the previous kingdoms, just like iron smashes everything that it strikes. ⁴¹The feet and toes of the statue that you saw, that were a mixture of iron and clay, indicate that the kingdom they represent will later be divided. ⁴²Some parts of that kingdom will be as strong as iron, but some parts will not remain together, just as iron and clay do not stick together. ⁴³The mixture of iron and clay in the statue shows also that the rulers of those kingdoms that

separate from each other will try to form alliances with each other as a result of members of the royal families of these kingdoms marrying each other. But that will not succeed, just as iron and clay do not stick together.

⁴⁴But while those kings are ruling, God who rules in heaven will establish a kingdom that will never end. No one will ever defeat its king. He will completely destroy all those kingdoms, but his kingdom will remain forever. ⁴⁵That is the meaning of the rock that something cut from the mountain, the rock that will crush to tiny bits the statue that is made of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. O king, the great God has shown you what will truly happen in the future. And you can trust what I told you about the meaning of the dream."

⁴⁶Then King Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself in front of me in great respect. He commanded his people that they burn incense and burn an offering of grain to honor me. ⁴⁷The king said to Daniel, "Your God has enabled you to tell me the meaning of this dream, so now I truly know that your God is greater than all the other gods, and King over all other kings. He reveals secrets; he makes known mysteries no one else could know."

⁴⁸Then the king gave many gifts to me, and he also appointed me to rule over the entire province of Babylon, and also to be the boss of all his wise men. ⁴⁹I asked the king to appoint Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to also have important positions in Babylon province, and the king did what I asked him to do. But I did my work while I stayed at the king's palace.

Chapter 3

¹King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his men to make a gold statue. It was 27 meters high and 2.7 meters wide. They set it up in the Dura plain in Babylon province. ²Then he sent messages to all the provincial governors, the district governors, the chief advisors, the counselors, the various judges, and all the other officials in the province. He told them to come to the dedication of the statue that he had set up. ³When they all arrived, they all stood in front of that statue.

⁴Then an announcer shouted, "You people who come from many countries and many people-groups and who speak many languages, listen to what the king has commanded! ⁵When you hear the sounds made by the trumpets, the flutes, the guitars, the harps, the wind instruments, and all the other musical instruments, bow down to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. ⁶Anyone who refuses to do that will be thrown into a blazing furnace!"

⁷So when all those people who had gathered heard the sounds made by the musical instruments, they all bowed down to worship the statue.

⁸But some of the men who studied the stars went to the king. ⁹They reported to him, "We hope that you, O king, will live a long time! ¹⁰You decreed that all the officials whom you had gathered should bow down and worship the gold statue when they heard the sounds made by the musical instruments. ¹¹You also decreed that those who refused to do that would be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹²Sir, there are some men from Judah whom you have appointed to be officials in Babylon province who have not obeyed your decree. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They have refused to worship your god and the gold statue that you have set up."

¹³Nebuchadnezzar became very angry. He commanded his soldiers to bring in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When they were brought to him, ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true that you three men have refused to worship my gods or the gold statue that I have set up? ¹⁵If that is true, I will give you one more chance. If you bow down to worship the statue that I have set up when you hear the sounds of the musical instruments, fine. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend our actions to you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we worship is able to rescue us. Sir, he will

rescue us from your power. ¹⁸But even if he does not rescue us, you need to know that we will never worship your gods or the gold statue that you have set up."

¹⁹Nebuchadnezzar was extremely angry. His being very angry even showed on his face. He commanded that the furnace should be made seven times as hot as usual. ²⁰After that was done, he commanded some of the very strong men of his army to tie Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and then to throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹So the soldiers tied them up and threw them into the furnace, while they were wearing their clothes. ²²Because the fire had been made very hot because the king had very strongly ordered them to do that, the flames leaped out and killed the soldiers as they were throwing the men into the fire! ²³So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell into the roaring flames.

²⁴But as Nebuchadnezzar was watching, he was amazed. He suddenly jumped up and shouted to his advisors, "Did we tie up three men and throw them into the flames, or not?"

They replied, "Yes, O king, we did."

²⁵Nebuchadnezzar shouted, "Look! I see four men in the fire! They have no ropes on them, they are walking around, and the flames are not hurting them! And the fourth man looks like a divine being!"

²⁶Nebuchadnezzar came closer to the opening of the flaming furnace, and he shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you who worship the Supreme God, come out of there! Come here!" So they stepped out of the fire.

²⁷Then all the king's officials crowded around them. They saw that the flames had not harmed them. The flames had not even singed any of the hair on their heads or scorched any of their clothes! There was not even any smell of smoke on them!

²⁸Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise the God whom Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worship! He sent one of his angels to rescue these three men who worship him and trust in him. They ignored my command; they insisted that they would worship only their God, and were willing to die instead of worshiping any other god. ²⁹Therefore, I am now making this decree: 'If any people, from any country or people-group or any language group, criticize the God whom Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worship, they will be cut in pieces and their houses will be torn down and made into a pile of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue people like this!'"

³⁰Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego more important positions in Babylon province than they had before.

Chapter 4

¹Several years after Nebuchadnezzar started to rule, he sent this message to the people of every nation and people-group and all language groups in his empire. He wrote,

"I wish that all things will go very well with you!

²I want you to know about all the wonderful miracles that the Supreme God has performed for me.

³He performs great miracles,

and does wonderful things.

His kingdom will last forever;

his rule over people will never end.

⁴I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace. I was living luxuriantly, and everything was going very well for me.

⁵But one night I had a dream that caused me to be very afraid. I saw visions that terrified me as I lay on my bed.

⁶So I summoned all the wise men in Babylon, in order that they would come and tell me what it meant. ⁷All the men who worked magic, the fortune-tellers, the men who worked sorcery, and men who studied the stars came to me. I told them what I had dreamed, but they could not tell me what it meant. ⁸Finally, Daniel came to me, and I decided to tell him what I had dreamed. One of my officials had given him a new name, Belteshazzar, to honor my own god. I knew that the spirit of the holy gods was in him.

⁹So, using the name that had been given to him, I said, 'Belteshazzar, you are the most important of all my fortune-tellers. I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and that you can reveal all mysteries. There is none that is too difficult for you. So, tell me what my dream means. ¹⁰This is what I dreamed while I was lying on my bed: I saw a large tree growing in the middle of the land. ¹¹The tree was very strong and had grown very tall; it seemed that its top reached up to the sky, with the result that everyone in the world could see it. ¹²It had beautiful leaves, and it had produced a lot of fruit for people to eat. Wild animals rested in the shade of that tree, and birds built nests in its branches. All the living creatures everywhere in the world got food from that tree.

¹³While I was still lying on my bed, I saw a vision. In the vision I saw a holy angel coming down from heaven. ¹⁴The angel shouted, "Cut down the tree, and cut off its branches! Strip off all of its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Chase away the animals that are lying in the shade of the tree, and the birds that are in its branches. ¹⁵But leave the stump of the tree and its roots in the ground. Fasten a band of iron and bronze around the stump, and allow it to stay there with grass around it."

¹⁶That tree seems to have represented a man, because the angel also said, "Cause that man to live out in the fields among the animals and plants. Cause the dew from the sky to make his body damp each morning. Do not allow him to continue to have a mind like humans; instead, cause him to have a mind like animals have, for seven years.

¹⁷The holy ones in heaven have issued a decree. They want everyone to know that God Most High rules over all the kingdoms in this world. He is the one who chooses the people to rule these kingdoms. He sometimes places very unimportant people in places of importance.'

¹⁸Belteshazzar, that is what I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw in my dream. Now tell me what the dream means. No one else can tell me. I asked all the very wise men in my kingdom to tell me what it means, but they were unable to do that. But you can tell me, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

¹⁹I, whose new name was Belteshazzar, did not say anything for some time, because I was very worried about the meaning of the dream. Finally, the king said to me, "Belteshazzar, do not be afraid about the dream and about what it means." I replied, "Sir, I wish that the events that were predicted in your dream would happen to your enemies, and not to you.

²⁰In your dream you saw a very strong and very tall tree. It seemed to reach to the sky, with the result that everyone in the world could see it. ²¹It had beautiful leaves and it had produced a lot of fruit for people to eat. Wild animals rested in the shade of that tree, and birds built nests in its branches. ²²Your majesty, that tree represents you! You have become very powerful. It is as though your greatness reaches up to the sky, and you rule people all over the world.

²³Then you saw a holy angel coming down from heaven. That angel said, 'Cut down the tree, and cut off its branches! Strip off all of its leaves, and scatter its fruit. But leave the stump of the tree and its roots in the ground. Fasten a band of iron and bronze around the stump and allow it to stay there with grass around it. Each morning cause the dew from the sky to make this man, who was represented by the tree, damp. Cause him to live in the fields with the animals for seven years.'

²⁴Your Majesty, that is what your dream means. That is what the Supreme God has declared will happen to you.

²⁵Your advisors will force you to live away from other people. You will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like cows do, and dew from the sky will cause your body to be damp every morning. You will live that way for seven years, until you learn that it is the Supreme God who rules over the kingdoms of the world, and he appoints the ones whom he chooses to rule them. ²⁶But the stump of the tree and its roots were left in the ground. That means that you will rule your kingdom again when you learn that it is God who is really the ruler. ²⁷Your

Majesty, please do what I am telling you to do. Stop sinning, and do what is right. Turn away from your evil behavior. Act mercifully to poor people. If you do that, perhaps you will continue to be successful."

²⁸But the king refused to do those things. So that is what happened to him. ²⁹Twelve months later, one day he was walking on the flat roof of his palace in Babylon. ³⁰As he looked out over the city, he said to those around him, "I have built this great city of Babylon to be the place where I rule! I have built it with my own power, in order to show people my glory, to show them that I am very great!"

³¹While he was still saying this, God spoke from heaven and said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, this is what I am saying to you: You are no longer the ruler of this kingdom! ³²Your advisors will force you to live away from other people. You will live in the fields with wild animals, and you will eat grass like cows do. You will live that way for seven years, until you learn that it is the Supreme God, who rules over the kingdoms of this world, and I appoint the ones whom I have chosen to rule them."

³³Immediately what God predicted happened. Nebuchadnezzar became insane, so his advisors forced him to live away from other people. He ate grass like cows do, and dew from the sky caused his body to be damp every morning. He lived like that until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers, and his fingernails became like birds' claws.

³⁴After those seven years ended, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up toward heaven, and I acknowledged that what God said was true. Then I could think correctly again. I praised and worshiped the Supreme God, and I honored him, the one who lives forever.

He rules forever;

his kingdom will never end.

³⁵All the people in the world are very insignificant; we are not like him.

He has the power to do whatever he wants to do,

among the angels in heaven and among us people who live on the earth.

So no one can stop him,

and no one can challenge him, saying to him,

"Why are you doing these things?"

³⁶When I was able to think correctly again, I was honored again, and I was able to rule my glorious kingdom again. My advisors came to me again to talk about what should be done, and I became greater and more powerful than I was before. ³⁷Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and honor God, the king who rules in heaven. All of his actions are just and right. And he is able to cause to become humble those who are proud, like I was.

Chapter 5

¹Several years later, Belshazzar became the king of Babylon. One day he invited a thousand of his officers to a big feast, and he drank a lot of wine with them. ²While he was drinking, he commanded that his servants bring to him the gold and silver cups that the previous king, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He did that because he wanted himself and his officials, his wives, and even his concubines to drink from them, making fun of the god that the Israelis worshiped. ³So his servants brought in all those gold cups, that had been taken many years previously from the temple of the true God in Jerusalem. Then the king and his officials and his wives and his slave wives drank wine from those cups. ⁴They drank to praise their idols that were made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and even wood and stone.

⁵Suddenly they saw a man's hand writing on the plaster of the wall opposite the lampstand. The king also saw the hand as it was writing. ⁶He became very frightened, and his face became pale. His knees started shaking, and his legs became very weak, with the result that he could not stand up.

⁷Then he shouted to summon the men who worked magic, the men who studied the stars, and the fortune-tellers. He said, "I will greatly honor any one of them who can read this writing and tell me what it means. I will give him a purple robe like I wear because I am the king, and I will put a gold chain around his neck. He will become a very important official in my kingdom; there will be only two others who will be more important than he will be."

⁸But when all those wise men came in, none of them could read the writing, or tell him what it meant. ⁹So King Belshazzar became more afraid. His face became even paler. And all his officials who were there at the feast did not know what to do.

¹⁰But when the mother of the king heard the king and his officials talking loudly about what had happened, she entered the room where they were having the feast. She said to Belshazzar, "Your majesty, I hope you will live for a long time! But do not be pale and afraid about this. ¹¹There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. When Nebuchadnezzar was ruling, they discovered that this man understood many things and was wise, just like the gods. The man who was king previously, Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him to be in charge of all the men in Babylon who worked magic, the men who worked sorcery, the men who studied the stars, and the fortune-tellers. ¹²That man's name is Daniel; the king gave him a new name, Belteshazzar. He is very intelligent and is able to know and understand many things. He is even able to tell the meaning of dreams, and explain riddles, and explain things that are very difficult to understand. Summon him, and he will tell you what this writing means."

¹³So they went and brought me in. The king asked me, "You must be Daniel! They told me that you are one of those who was brought here from Judah by the previous king. ¹⁴I have also heard that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that you are very wise and understand many things. ¹⁵My wise men and men who work magic have tried to read the writing on this wall and tell me what it means, but they are not able to do it. ¹⁶Someone told me that you can tell what dreams mean and explain things that are very difficult to understand. If you can read these words and tell me what they mean, I will give you a purple robe like I wear because I am the king, and I will put a gold chain around your neck. You will become a very important official in my kingdom; there will be only two others who will be more important than you will be."

¹⁷I replied to the king, "I do not want your gifts; keep them, or give them to someone else. But I will read for you the writing on the wall, and I will tell you what it means.

¹⁸Your Majesty, the Supreme God caused the man who was king before you, Nebuchadnezzar, to become a great ruler, who was greatly praised and honored. ¹⁹Because God caused him to become very great, people of many people-groups and nations and who spoke many different languages were very much afraid of him. He commanded his soldiers to kill those whom he wanted to be killed, and he spared those whom he wanted to spare. He honored those whom he wanted to honor, and he caused to be disgraced those whom he wanted to be disgraced. ²⁰But when he became very proud and stubborn, he was removed from being king. People did not consider him to be glorious anymore. ²¹His officials sent him away in order that he would not be near other people. God caused him to have a mind like animals have. He lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like cows do, and dew from the sky caused his body to be damp each morning. He was like that until he learned that the Supreme God is really the one who rules the kingdoms of this world, and that he appoints whomever he chooses to rule those kingdoms.

²²Now, Belshazzar, you have become the king. You also knew all those things, but you have not made yourself humble. ²³You have considered yourself to be greater than God, the Lord of heaven. So you have commanded your servants to bring to you these sacred cups, which were dedicated to the Supreme God, and which were taken from his temple in Jerusalem. You and your officials and your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from these cups, while you have been praising your own gods—gods which are made of gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone. Those are gods that cannot see, that cannot hear, and that do not know anything! You

have not honored the God who gives you breath and who controls everything that happens to you. ²⁴So God sent this hand to write a message for you.

²⁵This is the message that it wrote: 'Mene, mene, tekel, parsin.'

²⁶This is what those words mean:

'Mene' means 'numbered.' That means that God has been counting the days that you will rule, and he has decided that you will not rule anymore.

²⁷'Tekel' means 'weighed.' God has weighed you on a scale, and you do not weigh what you should.

²⁸'Peres' means 'divided.' God has divided your kingdom. It will be ruled by people from Media and by people from Persia."

²⁹Then Belshazzar did what he had promised. He put on me a purple robe like the one he himself wore. He put a gold chain around my neck. And he proclaimed that there would be only two others who would be more important than me in his kingdom.

³⁰But that same night soldiers from Media entered the city and killed Belshazzar, the King of Babylonia. ³¹Darius, the King of Media, became the King of Babylonia when he was sixty-two years old.

Chapter 6

¹King Darius decided to divide his kingdom into 120 provinces. He appointed a governor to rule each province. ²He also appointed me and two other men to be administrators, to supervise the governors and to be sure that they did the king's work properly, in order that the king would not have to worry. ³I soon showed that I was more capable to do the work better than all the other administrators and the governors. Because of that, the king planned to appoint me to be in charge of the entire empire. ⁴Then, the other administrators and the governors became jealous. So they began to search to find something that they could criticize about the way I was working for the king. But I always did my work faithfully and honestly, and was never lazy. So they could not find anything to criticize. ⁵They concluded, "The only way we can find something for which we can criticize Daniel will be something concerning the laws that his god has given him."

⁶So the administrators and governors went as one group to the king and said, "Your Majesty, we wish that you will live a long time! ⁷We administrators and governors and district governors and advisors and other officials have all agreed that you should make a law that everyone must obey. We want you to command that for the next thirty days people may pray only to you. If anyone prays to anyone else, either to a human or to a god, he must be thrown into a pit of lions. ⁸And because laws made by our governments of Media and Persia cannot be changed, we want you, the head of our government, to sign it." ⁹So King Darius wrote the law and signed it.

¹⁰But when I found out that the king had written and signed that law, I went home. I knelt down in my upstairs room and prayed. I looked toward Jerusalem, and the windows were open with the result that everyone could see me while I was praying. I prayed three times each day, just as I always did, thanking God. ¹¹The officials went together to my house and they saw me praying and requesting God to help me. ¹²So they returned to the king and said to him, "Do you remember that you wrote a law stating that for the next thirty days people may pray only to you, and if anyone prays to anyone else, either to a human or to a god, he will be thrown into a pit of lions?" The king replied, "Yes, that is the law that I wrote. It is a law of our governments of Media and Persia, which cannot be canceled."

¹³Then they said to the king, "That man Daniel, one of the men who were brought from Judah, is not paying any attention to you or the law that you signed. He prays to his god three times each day!" ¹⁴When the king heard that, he was very distressed. He tried to find a way to save me. All the rest of the day he tried to think of a way to rescue me.

¹⁵In the evening, many of the officials went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty, you know that our governments of Media and Persia have declared that no law that the king signs can be canceled. So Daniel must be thrown to the lions!"

¹⁶So the king gave the order, and his servants brought me and threw me into a pit where the lions were. Before they threw me in, the king said to me, "I hope that your God, whom you worship regularly, will rescue you!"

¹⁷They rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the pit. Then the king fastened a string across the entrance and put wax at each end, and stamped the wax with the seal from his ring and the seals of the rings of his officials, in order that no one could secretly rescue me. ¹⁸Then the king returned to his palace. That night he refused to eat any food. He would not allow any one to entertain him because he did not want to be happy, with the result that he would forget about me. And that night he was unable to sleep because he was worried about me.

¹⁹At dawn the next morning, the king got up and went quickly to the pit where the lions were. ²⁰When he came near it, he was very worried. He called out, "Daniel, you who serve the all-powerful God! Was your God, whom you worship regularly, able to save you from the lions?"

²¹I answered, "Your Majesty, I hope that you will live a long time! ²²Yes, my God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths, in order that they would not harm me! He did that because he knows that I have done nothing that he thinks is wrong. And, Your Majesty, I never did anything wrong to you!"

²³The king was extremely happy, and he commanded his servants to lift me out of the pit. When they did that, they saw that the lions had not wounded me at all. God had protected me because I trusted in him.

²⁴Then the king commanded that the men who had accused me should be seized and be thrown, along with their wives and children, into the pit where the lions were. When they were thrown into the pit, the lions leaped on them and crushed their bones before they fell onto the bottom of the pit!

²⁵Then King Darius wrote this message and sent it throughout his kingdom to the people of every people-group and nation and from all language groups:

"I wish that all things go very well with you!

²⁶I command that everyone in my kingdom should fear and revere the God that Daniel worships.

He is the all-powerful God,

and he will live forever.

His kingdom will never be destroyed;

he will rule forever.

²⁷He rescues and saves his people,

he performs all kinds of miracles

in heaven and on the earth.

He rescued Daniel from the power of the lions!"

²⁸So I was successful all during the time that Darius ruled and during the time that Cyrus, the King of Persia, ruled.

Chapter 7

¹Previously, during the first year that Belshazzar was the king of Babylonia, I had a dream and a vision one night as I lay on my bed. The next morning I wrote down what I had dreamed. This is what I wrote:

²Daniel, had a vision during the night. In the vision I saw that strong winds were blowing from all four directions, stirring up the water in the ocean. ³Then I saw four beasts coming out of the ocean. All four of them were different.

⁴The first one resembled a lion, but it had wings like an eagle has. But as I watched, something tore off its wings. The beast was left there, standing on its two hind legs, like a human being stands. And it was given a mind like humans have.

⁵The second beast resembled a bear. It was crouching, and it held between its teeth three ribs from another animal that it had killed and eaten. Someone said to it, "Stand up and eat as much meat as you want!"

⁶Then I saw in front of me the third of these beasts. It resembled a leopard, but it had four wings protruding from its back. The wings were like a bird's wings. It had four heads. It was given the power to rule people.

⁷In the vision I saw a fourth beast. It was stronger than the other beasts, and it was more terrifying. It crushed other creatures with its huge iron teeth and ate their flesh. The parts of animals that it did not grind with its teeth, it trampled on the ground. It was different from the other three beasts: It had ten horns on its head.

⁸While I was looking at those horns, I saw a little horn appear on the head of that beast. It tore out three of the other horns. This little horn had eyes like humans have, and it had a mouth with which it spoke very boastfully.

⁹Then while I watched,

thrones were put in the places where they belonged,

and God, the one who had been living forever, sat on one of the thrones.

His clothes were as white as snow,

and his hair was as white as pure wool.

His throne had wheels that were blazing with fire,

and his throne was also blazing.

¹⁰A fire was rushing out of in front of him like a stream.

Many thousands of people were there serving him,

and millions of other people were standing in front of him.

They started the court session,

and they opened the books in which they had written the record of all the good and bad things that people had done.

¹¹While I was watching, I could hear the little horn speaking very boastfully. As I continued to watch, the fourth beast was killed. Its corpse was thrown into a fire and completely burned. ¹²The power of the other three beasts was taken away from them, but they were allowed to continue to live for a while.

¹³While I continued to see the vision that night, I saw someone who resembled a human being. He was coming closer to me, surrounded by clouds. Then he was taken to God, the one who had been living forever. ¹⁴He was honored and given great authority to rule over all the nations in the world, in order that people from every people-group and every nation, people from all language groups, would worship him. He will rule forever; he will never stop ruling. The kingdom that he rules will never be destroyed.

¹⁵As for me, Daniel, I was very terrified by what I had seen in that vision, and I did not know what to think about it.

¹⁶I went to one of those who were standing in front of the throne of God, and I asked him to tell me what it meant. So he told me the meaning of it.

¹⁷He said, "The four huge beasts represent four kingdoms that will exist on the earth. ¹⁸But the Supreme God will give power to his people to rule, and they shall rule forever."

¹⁹Then I wanted to know what the fourth beast signified— the beast that was different from the other three, the beast that crushed those that it attacked with its bronze claws, and then ate their flesh with its iron teeth, and trampled on the parts of their bodies that it did not eat. ²⁰I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head, and about the horn that appeared later, which got rid of three of the other horns. I wanted to know what it meant that it had eyes and a mouth with which it spoke very boastfully. The beast that was represented by that horn was more terrifying than the other beasts. ²¹While I was having the vision, I saw that this horn attacked God's people and was defeating them. ²²But then the Supreme God, the one who had been living forever, came and judged in favor of the people who belonged to him. And I knew that it was time for God's people to receive authority to rule.

²³Then the man who was standing there said to me, "The fourth beast represents an empire that will exist on the earth; that empire will be different from all other empires. The army of that empire will crush people all over the world and trample on their bodies. ²⁴As for its ten horns, they represent ten kings who will rule that empire, one after the other. Then another king will appear. He will be different from the previous kings. He will defeat the three kings that were represented by the three horns that were pulled out. ²⁵He will rebuke the Supreme God, and he will oppress God's people. He will try to change the sacred festivals and their religious laws. He will control them for three and a half years.

²⁶But there will be a session of the court in heaven, and that king's authority will be taken away, and he will be completely destroyed. ²⁷Then all the power and the greatness of all the kingdoms on the earth will be given to the people who belong to the Supreme God. The kingdom that he rules will endure forever. And the rulers of all the nations on the earth will serve and obey him."

²⁸That is what I saw in my vision. I, Daniel, was terrified, with the result that my face became pale. But I did not tell anyone about the vision that I had seen.

Chapter 8

¹During the third year that Belshazzar was the King of Babylonia, I had another vision. ²In that vision I was in Susa, the capital city of Elam Province. I was standing alongside the Ulai Canal. ³I looked up and saw a ram that was standing alongside the canal. It had two long horns, but the one that grew last was longer than the one that grew first. ⁴The ram butted away with its horns everything that was west and everything that was north and everything that was south of it. There were no other animals that were able to oppose it, and none that could rescue other animals from its power. The ram did whatever it wanted to do and became very powerful.

⁵While I was thinking about what I had seen, in the vision I saw a goat come from the west. It ran across the land very quickly, with the result that it seemed that its feet did not touch the ground. This goat had one very large horn between its eyes. ⁶It was very angry, and it ran straight toward the ram that I had seen previously, the ram that was standing alongside the canal. ⁷The goat struck the ram furiously and broke off its two horns, with the result that the ram had no power to defend itself. So the goat knocked the ram down and trampled on it. No one could rescue the ram from the goat's power. ⁸The goat became very powerful. But when its power was very great, its horn was broken off. But four other large horns took its place. They each pointed in a different direction.

⁹Then from one of those large horns appeared a little horn, which became very big, and pointed toward the south and then toward the east and then toward the beautiful land of Israel. ¹⁰The man who was represented by that horn became very strong, with the result that he attacked some of the soldiers of the army of heaven, and the stars in the sky which represented God's people. He threw some of them to the ground and trampled on them. ¹¹He defied himself to be greater than the leader of the army of heaven, and prevented priests from offering sacrifices to him. He also defiled the temple. ¹²Then God's people allowed the man who was represented by that horn to

control them, with the result that they sinned by offering sacrifices to him. And he threw to the ground the laws that contained the true religion. Everything that he did was successful.

¹³Then I heard two angels who were talking to each other. One of them asked, "How long will the things that were in this vision continue? How long will the man who rebels against God and causes the temple to be defiled be able to prevent priests from offering sacrifices? How long will he trample on the temple and on the armies of heaven?"

¹⁴The other angel replied, "It will continue for 1,150 days. During each of those days, people will not be permitted to offer sacrifices in the morning or in the evening. After that, the temple will be purified."

¹⁵While I, Daniel, was trying to understand what the vision meant, suddenly an angel who resembled a man stood in front of me. ¹⁶And I heard a man call out from the other side of the Ulai Canal, saying, "Gabriel, explain to him the meaning of the vision that he saw!"

¹⁷So Gabriel came and stood beside me. I was very terrified, with the result that I fell onto the ground. But he said to me, "You human, it is necessary for you to understand that the events that you saw in the vision will occur near the time that the world will end."

¹⁸While he was speaking, I fainted. I lay there, unconscious, with my face still on the ground. But Gabriel put his hand on me and lifted me up in order that I could stand again.

¹⁹Then he said, "I have come here to tell you what will happen because of God being angry. These things will happen near the time when the world will end. ²⁰As for the ram with two horns that you saw, those horns represent the kingdoms of Media and Persia. ²¹The goat that you saw represents the kingdom of Greece, and the horn that appeared between its eyes represents its first king. ²²As for the four horns that grew after the first horn was broken off, they represent four kingdoms into which that first kingdom will be divided after the first king dies. Those four kingdoms will not be as strong as the first kingdom was.

²³The people in those kingdoms will become very wicked, with the result that it will be necessary for them to be punished. But near the time when those kingdoms will end, one of those kingdoms will have a king who will be very proud. He will also be very fierce and very deceitful. ²⁴He will become very powerful, but it will not be because of what he himself does. He will terribly destroy things in many places, and he will succeed in doing everything that he wants to. He will get rid of many powerful men, and also some of God's people. ²⁵Because he is very cunning, he will succeed by doing things that deceive many people. He will be proud of himself. He will get rid of many people when they think that they are safe. He will also rebel against God, who is the greatest king. But God will destroy him, without the help of any human being.

²⁶What you saw in the vision about priests being prevented from making sacrifices in the morning and in the evening, which I explained to you, will surely happen. But for the present time, do not reveal the vision to others, because it will be many years before those things happen."

²⁷Then I, Daniel, became weak, and I was sick for several days. Then I arose and returned to doing the work that the king had given to me, but I was perplexed about the vision, and I could not understand it.

Chapter 9

¹Now I am going to tell you about what happened when Darius, who was from the Mede people-group and who was the son of Xerxes, ruled as the King of Babylonia. ²During the first year that he was the king, I, Daniel, was studying in the holy books the message that Yahweh had given to the prophet Jeremiah. In that message Jeremiah had written that Jerusalem would be destroyed and remain ruined for seventy years. ³After I read that, I pleaded to Yahweh my God to help us, praying and fasting. While doing that, I was wearing rough cloth and sitting in ashes to show that I was very sad about what had happened to us.

⁴I confessed the sins that we had committed, and this is what I prayed:

Lord, you are great and awesome! You have faithfully done what you said that you would do for us. You faithfully love those who love you and who do what you have commanded that they should do. ⁵But we Israelis have sinned. We have done things that are wrong. We have done wicked things, and we have rebelled against you. We have turned away from obeying your commands. ⁶Your prophets spoke for you, giving your messages to our kings, to our other rulers, to our other ancestors, and to all the Israeli people, but we have refused to pay attention to those prophets.

⁷Lord, you always do what is righteous, but we have caused ourselves to be ashamed. This is still true about all of the Israelis who live in Jerusalem and who live in other places in Judea. It is also true about all us Israelis whom you scattered, who were taken to other countries, some near Israel and some far away, because we were very unfaithful to you. ⁸Yahweh, we and our kings and our other rulers and our other ancestors have done very shameful things and have sinned against you. ⁹Although we have rebelled against you, you act mercifully toward us and you are willing to forgive us. ¹⁰Yahweh our God, when you gave your laws to your prophets who served you, and they told us to conduct our lives according to those laws, we did not listen to you. ¹¹All of us Israeli people have disobeyed your laws, and we have turned away from obeying what you said. We have sinned against you. As a result, you have caused us to experience the terrible things that your servant Moses said would happen to us if we sinned against you.

¹²You warned us and our rulers that you would punish Jerusalem severely by causing a great disaster there, a disaster that would be worse than any disaster that any other city had ever experienced, and you have done what you said that you would do. ¹³You punished us just like Moses wrote that you would do. But, Yahweh our God, we still have not tried, by turning away from our sinning and by heeding your truth, to persuade you to act mercifully toward us. ¹⁴So, because we did not obey you, you prepared to punish us, and then you did punish us, because you always do what is righteous.

¹⁵Lord our God, you brought your people out of Egypt by your great power, and by doing that you have caused people from that time until the present time to know that you are great even though we have sinned and done wicked things. ¹⁶Lord, Jerusalem is your city, and your temple was built there on your sacred hill. Now all the people who live in nearby countries despise Jerusalem and us your people because of our sins and because of the evil things that our ancestors did. But now, because you do what is righteous, we request you to not be angry with Jerusalem any longer.

¹⁷Lord our God, listen to what I am praying and pleading for you to do. For your own sake that people will know that you are very great, act kindly concerning your temple, which was destroyed by the armies of Babylonia. ¹⁸My God, listen to my prayer. Look at us and see our troubles, and see that this city that belongs to you has been ruined. We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done what is right. ¹⁹Lord, listen to us! Lord, forgive us! Lord, this city and these people belong to you, so we plead with you to heed what we are saying and act to help us right now, for your own sake that people will know that you are very great!

²⁰I continued praying and confessing the sins that I and my people Israel had committed, and pleading with Yahweh my God that he would restore the temple on the sacred hill in Jerusalem. ²¹While I was praying, Gabriel, the angel whom I had seen in the vision previously, came flying rapidly to me, at the time in the evening when the priests offered sacrifices. ²²He said to me, "Daniel, I have come to you to enable you to understand clearly the message that God gave to Jeremiah. ²³When you began to plead with God, he gave me a message to give to you. He loves you very much, so he has sent me to tell you what he said to me. So now pay attention in order that you may understand the meaning of what he revealed to Jeremiah.

²⁴God has determined that there will be 490 years until he frees your people from the guilt of their sins and to atone for the evil things that they have done. Then God will rule everyone justly, and he will do that forever. And what you saw in the vision and what Jeremiah prophesied will come true, and the sacred temple will be dedicated to God again.

²⁵You need to know and understand this: There will be 49 years from the time that the king commands that Jerusalem should be rebuilt until the leader that God has chosen will come. Then 434 years later, Jerusalem will be

rebuilt, and it will have streets and will have a moat around it to protect the city. But that will be a time when God's people have a lot of troubles. ²⁶After those 434 years, the leader whom God has appointed will be killed when it seems that he will have accomplished nothing unjustly. After that, the temple will be destroyed by the army of a powerful ruler. The city and the temple will be destroyed like a flood destroys everything. That will be the beginning of the war and destruction that God has decreed will happen. ²⁷That ruler will make a strong agreement with many people. He will promise to do for seven years what he has said in that agreement. But when that time is half finished, he will prevent priests from giving any more offerings and sacrifices to God. A disgusting idol will be put on the highest part of the temple, and it will stay there until God gets rid of the one who put it there, which is what he said that he would do."

Chapter 10

¹During the third year that Cyrus was the king of Persia, I Daniel, who had been given the name Belteshazzar, received another message from God. The message was true, but it was very difficult for me to understand it. But later I understood the message because of the vision that I had seen.

²At that time I had been sad for three weeks about what had happened to Jerusalem. ³I did not eat any tasty food or any meat or drink any wine. I did not even put any perfumed oil on my face or hair for those three weeks.

⁴When those three weeks ended, on April 23, my companions and I were standing on the bank of the great Tigris River. ⁵I looked up and saw someone there who was wearing fine white clothes and a belt made of pure gold. ⁶His body shone like a precious beryl stone. His face was as bright as a flash of lightning. His eyes were like flaming torches. His arms and legs shone like polished bronze. And his voice was very loud, like the roar of a huge crowd.

⁷I, Daniel, was the only one who saw this vision. The men who were with me did not see anything, but they sensed that someone was there, and they became terrified. They ran away and hid themselves. ⁸So I was left there by myself, looking at this very unusual vision. I had no strength left. My face became very pale, with the result that no one would have recognized me. ⁹I saw a man there, and when I heard him speak, I fell to the ground. I fainted, and I lay there with my face on the ground.

¹⁰Suddenly someone's hand took hold of me and lifted me, with the result that I was on my hands and knees, but I was still trembling. ¹¹The man said to me, "Daniel, God loves you very much. Stand up and listen to what I am going to say to you, because God sent me to you." When he said that, I stood up, but I was still trembling.

¹²Then he said to me, "Daniel, do not be afraid. God has heard what you have prayed ever since the first day that you determined to humble yourself in order to understand the vision. I have come to you because of what you prayed. ¹³The evil spirit who rules the kingdom of Persia resisted me for 21 days, but Michael, who is one of God's chief angels, came to help me. I left him there in Persia to resist that evil spirit who rules there. ¹⁴I have come here to enable you to understand what will happen to the Israeli people in the future. Do not forget that the vision that you saw is about things that will happen in the future, not about things that will happen very soon."

¹⁵While he was saying that, I stared at the ground and was unable to say anything because I was very afraid.

¹⁶Suddenly the angel, who resembled a human, touched my lips. Then I was able to speak, and I said to him, "Sir, because I have seen this vision, I have become very weak, with the result that I cannot stop trembling. ¹⁷I am not able to talk to you, my master. I have no strength left, and it is very difficult for me to breathe."

¹⁸But he took hold of me again, and enabled me to become stronger again. ¹⁹He said to me, "You human, God loves you very much. So do not be afraid. I desire that things will go well for you and that you will be encouraged." When he had said that, I felt even stronger, and I said, "Sir, tell me what you want to tell me. You have enabled me to feel stronger."

²⁰⁻²¹Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? It is to reveal to you what is written in the book which reveals God's truth. But now I must return to fight against the evil spirit who rules the kingdom of Persia. After I

have defeated him, the evil angel who guards Greece will appear and I must defeat him. Michael, who guards you Israelite people, will certainly help me, but there is no one else to help me.”

Chapter 11

¹“As for me, during the first year that Darius was king, I helped and encouraged Michael.”

²The angel also said, “And what I am going to reveal to you now will truly happen. There will be three more kings to rule Persia, one after the other. Then there will be a fourth king, who will be much richer than the others. As a result of his giving a lot of money to people, they will enable him to become very powerful. Then he will incite many nations to fight against the kingdom of Greece.

³Then a very powerful king will appear in Greece. He will rule over a very large empire, and he will do whatever he wants to do. ⁴But when he has become very powerful, he will die. Then his kingdom will be divided into four parts. Kings who are not his descendants will rule, but they will not be as powerful as he was. ⁵Then the King of Egypt will become very powerful. But one of his army generals will become more powerful than he is, and he will rule a bigger area. ⁶Several years later, the King of Egypt and the King of Syria will make an alliance to help each other. The King of Syria will give his daughter to the King of Egypt to become his wife. But she will not be able to influence him very long, and that woman, her husband, her child, and her servants will all be killed.

⁷Soon after that, one of her relatives will become King of Egypt. His army will attack the army of Syria. They will enter the fortress of the soldiers of Syria and defeat them. ⁸They will return to Egypt, taking the statues of the gods of the people of Syria and many items made of silver and gold that had been dedicated to those gods. Then for several years his army will not attack the army of the King of Syria. ⁹Then the army of the King of Syria will invade Egypt, but they will soon return to Syria. ¹⁰However, the sons of the King of Syria will prepare to start a war, and they will gather a large army. That army will march south and spread all over Israel like a huge flood. They will attack a strong fortress in the south of Israel.

¹¹Then the King of Egypt, having become very angry, will march with his army north from Egypt and fight against the army of Syria. The King of Syria will gather together a very large army, but the army of the King of Egypt will defeat them. ¹²The King of Egypt will become very proud because of his army having killed a very large number of soldiers from Syria, but his army will not continue to win battles. ¹³The King of Syria will again gather together an army that will be bigger than the one that he had before. After a few years, he will again march south on their way to Egypt with a large army and a lot of equipment for fighting battles.

¹⁴At that time, many people in Egypt will rebel against their king. In order to fulfill a vision that one of their leaders had seen, some violent people from your country of Israel will also rebel in order to not be controlled by Egypt anymore, but they will be defeated. ¹⁵Then the King of Syria will come south with his army and pile up dirt against the walls of a city that is well protected, and they will break through those walls and they will capture the city. The soldiers from Egypt who have come to defend that city, even the best troops, will not be strong enough to continue to fight. ¹⁶So the King of Syria will do whatever he wants to, and no one will be able to oppose him. His army will occupy the glorious land of Israel and completely control it. ¹⁷Then he will decide to march south with all the soldiers from his kingdom. He will make an alliance with the King of Egypt and in order that his daughter will help him to destroy the kingdom of Egypt, he will give her to the King of Egypt to become his wife. But that plan will fail. ¹⁸After that, the army of the King of Syria will attack the regions that are close to the Mediterranean Sea, and his army will conquer many of them. But the army of a leader from another country will defeat the army of Syria and will stop their king from continuing to be proud. He will do to the King of Syria what he deserved for being very insolent. ¹⁹Then the King of Syria will return to the fortresses in his own land. But he will be defeated, and he will die there.

²⁰Then another man will succeed him. That king will send one of his officers to oppress the people in Jerusalem by forcing them to pay big taxes, in order to get more money for his kingdom. But after a few years that king will die, but he will not die as a result of people being angry with him or in a battle.

²¹The next King of Syria will be an evil man who, because he will not be the son of the previous king, he will not have the right to become king. But he will come when people do not expect it, and he will become king by tricking the people. ²²When his army advances, they will attack any armies that oppose him and destroy those armies. They will also kill God's Supreme Priest. ²³By making treaties with the rulers of other nations, he will deceive them, and he will become very powerful, even though he rules a nation that does not have a lot of people. ²⁴Suddenly his army will invade a province that is very wealthy, and they will do things that none of his ancestors did: they will capture in battles all kinds of possessions from the people whom they defeat. Then the king will divide those possessions among his friends. He will also plan for his army to attack fortresses in Egypt, but only for a short time.

²⁵He will courageously conscript a large and powerful army to attack the army of the king of Egypt. But the King of Egypt will prepare to fight against them with a huge and powerful army. However, someone will deceive him, with the result that his plan will not be successful. ²⁶Even his most trusted advisors will plan to get rid of him. His army will be defeated and many of his soldiers will be killed. ²⁷Then the two kings who both want to rule that area will sit down at the same table and eat together, but they will both lie to each other. Neither of them will get what he wants, because it will not be the time that God has determined for them to rule. ²⁸The army of the King of Syria will return to Syria, taking with them all the valuable things that they had captured. The king will be determined to get rid of the Supreme Priest of the Jewish people. He will do what he wants to in Israel, and then return to his own country.

²⁹When it is the time that God has decided, the King of Syria and his army will invade Egypt again. But this time he will not be successful like he was before. ³⁰The army of Rome will come in ships and oppose his army and cause him to be afraid. So he will be very angry, and with his army he will return to Israel and try to get rid of the Supreme Priest. The King of Syria will do what those who have abandoned the Jewish religion advise him to do for them. ³¹Some of his soldiers will do things to defile the temple. They will prevent the priests from offering sacrifices each day, and they will put in the temple something that is disgusting.

³²By deceiving those who have abandoned the Jewish religion, he will win them to become his supporters. But those who are devoted to their God will firmly oppose them. ³³And wise Israeli leaders will teach others also. But for a while, some of those wise leaders will be killed in battles, and some will be burned to death, and some will be robbed, and some will be put in prison.

³⁴While God's people are being persecuted, some people will help them a little bit, although some of those who help them will not do it sincerely. ³⁵Some of those wise leaders will be killed, but as a result the others will be purified. This suffering will continue until it is the time that God has appointed for it to end.

³⁶The King of Syria will do what he wants to. He will boast and say that he is greater than any god. He will even revile the Supreme God. He will be able to do what he wants until the time that God punishes him. God will accomplish what he has planned. ³⁷The King of Syria will ignore the god that his ancestors worshiped and the god that many women love. He will ignore every god, because he will think that he is greater than all of them. ³⁸But he will honor the god who people think protects fortresses. That is a god whom his ancestors did not honor. And he will give gold, silver, jewels and other expensive gifts to that god. ³⁹He will ask that god from another country to help him to defend his fortresses. He will greatly honor those who allow him to be their ruler. He will appoint some of them to important positions in the government; and to reward them, he will give them some land.

⁴⁰But when his time to rule is almost ended, the army of the King of Egypt will attack his army. The army of the King of Syria will fight against them furiously. His soldiers will be driving chariots and riding on horses and traveling in many ships. His army will invade many countries and spread all over those countries like a flood.

⁴¹They will invade the glorious land of Israel and kill tens of thousands of people. But the people of the Edom people-group and the people of the Moab people-group and the people of the Ammon people-group who are still alive will escape. ⁴²When the army of Syria invades other countries, even the people of Egypt will be defeated.

⁴³The army of Syria will take away from Egypt gold, silver, and other valuable items. The people of Libya and Ethiopia will allow the King of Syria to rule over them. ⁴⁴But he will become very frightened when he hears reports about what is happening in the east and in the north. So he will become very angry, and send his army to fight

furiously and kill many of their enemies. ⁴⁵The King of Syria will set up his royal tents in the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the hill in Jerusalem on which the temple exists. But he will be killed there, because there will be no one to help him."

Chapter 12

¹The angel also said to me, "After those things happen, the great angel Michael, who protects the Israeli people, will appear. Then there will be a time when there will be great troubles. The troubles will be greater than any troubles since the nations began. At that time, all of your people whose names have been written in the book containing the names of those who have eternal life will be saved. ²Many of those who have died will become alive again. Some of them will live eternally with God, and some will be eternally shamed in hell. ³Those who were wise will shine as brightly as the sky is bright when the sun is shining. And those who have shown to others the way to live righteously will shine forever, like the stars. ⁴But as for you, Daniel, close up the scroll in which you are writing, and seal it in order that no one can open it until the end of the world is near. Before that happens, many people will travel rapidly here and there, learning more and more about many things."

⁵When that angel finished speaking, I, Daniel, looked up, and suddenly I saw two other angels. One was standing on the side of the river where I was, and one was standing on the other side. ⁶One of them called to the other one, who was wearing linen clothes, who was now standing further up the river, "How long will it be until these amazing events end?"

⁷The one wearing the linen clothes and standing further up the river raised his hands toward the sky and solemnly promised to the one who lives forever, "It will be three and a half years, and when God's holy people and their strength are no longer being shattered to pieces, then all these things are finished."

⁸I heard what he said, but I did not understand it. So I asked, "Sir, what will be the result when these things end?"

⁹He replied, "Daniel, you must leave now. I cannot answer your question because what it means must be kept secret until the time when everything ends. ¹⁰Many people will thoroughly purify their inner beings. But wicked people will not understand these things. They will continue to be wicked. Only those who are wise will understand these things. ¹¹But I can tell you that before everything ends, there will be one thousand two hundred ninety days, from the time that people are prevented from offering sacrifices each day, that is, from the time that the abominable thing is put in the temple. ¹²God will be pleased with those who remain faithful until the end of one thousand three hundred thirty five days.

¹³So now I say to you, continue to faithfully trust God until your life on earth ends. You will die, but when everything ends, you will receive your reward from God."

Hosea

Chapter 1

¹Yahweh gave Hosea these messages during the years that Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and when Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

²When Yahweh spoke for the first time through the prophet Hosea, he said, "Go and marry a prostitute. She will have children because she has given herself to other men. When you marry a prostitute, this will show how my people have been so shamefully unfaithful to me. It will show them how they have left me, their God." ³So Hosea married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

⁴Yahweh said to Hosea, "Give your baby the name Jezreel, because I will soon punish the family members of King Jehu for the murders that he committed in the city of Jezreel. I will also bring the kingdom of Israel to an end. ⁵On that day I will destroy the fighting strength of the army of Israel, there in the Valley of Jezreel."

⁶Gomer soon became pregnant again, and this time she gave birth to a daughter. Then Yahweh spoke to him, "Give her the name Lo-Ruhamah, which means 'no mercy,' because I will no longer have any mercy for the people of Israel, and I will not forgive them for even one sin they have committed. ⁷But I will have mercy on the people of Judah. I will save them—but not by deadly weapons, the bow, the sword, or battle. I will not save them by armies or by strong horses and those who ride on them. Instead, I, Yahweh myself, will save them."

⁸After Gomer had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. ⁹Yahweh said "Give him the name Lo-Ammi, which means 'not my people,' because you, O Israel, are not my people—and I will no longer protect you as your God.

¹⁰One day in the future, the people of Israel will be as numerous as the grains of sand by the sea. No one will be able to count them. I have said to Israel, 'You are not my people,'—but one day I will say to them, 'You are the people whom I will protect and love.' ¹¹On that day I, Yahweh, will gather all the people of Judah and bring them together with all the people of Israel. They will choose from among themselves a single leader, and they will go out of that land in which they were held as exiles. On that day they will say, 'Great is the day of Jezreel!' (Jezreel means, 'God plants his people in his land.')

Chapter 2

¹Call your male fellow Israelites, 'You are Yahweh's people,' and call your female fellow Israelites, 'Yahweh has been kind to you.'"

²Yahweh said to me, "I want you to accuse Israel, who is like a mother to you, of being like an unfaithful wife to me.

This nation is no longer like a wife to me,

and I am no longer like a husband to her.

Tell Israel that they must stop acting like a prostitute; she must stop worshiping idols.

Israel must stop worshiping idols. She must stop acting like a woman who leaves her husband and goes to other men.

³If she does not stop,

I will take her clothes off her and make her naked like she was when she was born.

I will make her like the barren wilderness—dry and lifeless; I will make her like a woman dying from thirst in the desert.

⁴I will have no pity on her people, the people of Israel,
because their nation is like a prostitute.

⁵Israel is like a prostitute;
she is like a woman who has had these children from doing shameful things with other men.

Israel decided to hurry after these idols whom she loved, to worship other gods.

She thought that it was those gods who gave her bread and water.

She thought that it was those gods who gave her wool, linen, and olive oil, and also wine to drink.

⁶So I will block Israel's road with thornbushes,
and I will build a wall around her,
so that she cannot find the path to take.

⁷Israel will run after her idols
but she will not find them.

She will search for her false gods,
but she will not find them.

Then, like a prostitute who wants to return to her husband, she will say to me, 'I will go back to you, the one I loved at first,

because my life was better with you than it is now.'

⁸The people will say this, because they did not know that it was I, Yahweh, who had given them their grain, new wine, and olive oil.

It was I who had given them much silver and gold so they would become wealthy.

But then they made all that gold and silver into objects to use in worshipping the idol Baal.

⁹Therefore I will take away from Israel all the grain I gave them.

When the wheat is ready for harvest, I will keep them from getting it.

The new wine that I gave them, I will take it away.

I will take away from them all the wool and linen I gave them to make clothes for themselves,
the clothes that covered their nakedness.

¹⁰I will treat Israel as a man treats his wife when he finds her with other men.

I will strip her naked in front of her lovers.

No one will be able rescue her from what I will do to her.

¹¹I will make the people in Israel stop holding their celebrations;
they will stop holding their festivals every year.

They will no longer celebrate the beginning of every month.

They will no longer celebrate the Sabbath days.

They will no longer be able to hold the festivals scheduled throughout the year.

¹²I will destroy all of Israel's grapevines and fig trees.

This is because Israel is like a woman who says, 'These were the things that my lovers gave me in payment.'

I, Yahweh, will turn those places into a forest, a thicket in which no vines can grow,

and where wild animals will devour any fruit that grows there.'

¹³I will punish this woman named Israel for all the times that she burned incense to worship the Baal idols.

She decorated herself with rings and jewelry, as a prostitute would adorn herself for her lovers.

She used to follow her lovers—like Israel has gone after the Baals—those false gods that she worshiped.

And she forgot about me." This is what Yahweh says.

¹⁴"I will lead her into the wilderness and tell her that I love her.

I will persuade her to love me again. ¹⁵I will give her vineyards back to her once more,

and in the Valley of Achor I will cause her to hope once more.

She will answer me with love and delight, as it was back in the first days when we first loved each other—
when I set her free, and she came up out of Egypt.

¹⁶At that time,

Israel will call me, 'My Husband,' as a woman would say to her human husband.

She will no longer call out to a god, 'My Baal,' but she will call out to me as 'My Husband.'

¹⁷I will not allow Israel to speak the names of the images of Baal that she used to worship.

My people will forget the names of those Baals and their idols, and my people Israel will never worship them again.

¹⁸At that time I will make a covenant for them:

it will be with all the wild animals and birds,

and even with the little animals that crawl along the ground.

They will never harm my people again.

I will promise to remove all the weapons that are used for fighting battles,

the bows and arrows, and the swords, and every war, I will take them all away and destroy all of them.

And I will let all of my people rest in peace;

they will not be afraid anymore.

¹⁹You will be like my wife forever, Israel.

I will promise myself to you, by doing what is right, and by loving what is just.

I promise to love you and to show you kindness even when you do not deserve it.

²⁰I will keep my promise to you, Israel. I will never lie to you;

and you will come to know me—my name is Yahweh.

²¹At that time,

I will help you,” says Yahweh.

“I will give a command to the sky,

and the sky will pour out rain onto the ground.

²²And the ground will provide grain, new wine and olive trees, and they will grow for the people of Israel.

²³At that time, I will take care of the Israelite people

as a farmer plants his own land and takes care of his crops.

I will show my love to those people whom I called ‘Not my People’.

And those whom I called ‘Not my People’,

I will now call by a new name: ‘You are my People’.

They will say to me, ‘You are our God.’”

Chapter 3

¹Then Yahweh said to me, “Go and love a woman, even though she is loved by another man, and she is also unfaithful to her husband. You will be like me, because I love the people of Israel, even though they worship other gods and eat raisin cakes in their honor.”

²Even though she was a slave, owned by another person, I bought her for 170 grams of silver, and 330 liters of barley grain. ³Then I said to her, “You will live with me from now on. You will no longer be a prostitute who sleeps with various men. You will not belong to any other man, only to me, and I will be faithful to you and live with you for the rest of my life.”

⁴When I do these things, this is to show that the people of Israel will live for a long time and not have any king ruling over them. They will have no prince, no sacrifices or pillars set up for worship, ephods or idols in their houses. ⁵After some time, the people of Israel will return to Yahweh; they will hope that he will receive them back. They will hope to have a descendant of David for their king again. In the later time, they will come to Yahweh to honor him and tremble before him because of his goodness to them.

Chapter 4

¹Listen to the message Yahweh has for you.

“You people of Israel, Yahweh is accusing you, you who live in this place.”

He says, “I cannot find anyone here who tells the truth.

I cannot see anyone who loves me.

None of you can honestly say that he knows me.

²You curse and lie, you kill and steal, and you commit adultery.

You have broken every law,

and you commit one murder after another.

³Because of what the people are doing, the land is now a wilderness.

Every creature that lives here is dying,

from the animals that live in the fields,

to the birds that fly in the sky;

even the fish in the sea, they are also dying.

⁴But you must not accuse anyone else for this trouble.

You must not allow anyone to correct another person; no one has that right, because everyone is guilty.

And I am also accusing the priests. ⁵You priests sin during the day

and the prophets with you sin at night.

I promise you, I will destroy Israel, who is like a mother to you.

⁶My people are perishing because you priests have refused to understand me.

And why do you understand me so little? Because you have rejected the things I have instructed you to do.

So I am rejecting you from being priests to me.

Look at what you have forgotten: You have forgotten the instructions that I, your God, gave to you.

Because you forgot me, I will forget your children.

⁷The more numerous you priests become,

the more you do the things that I have forbidden.

You have abandoned me in order to become shameful.

⁸When other people sin, they bring sacrifices to me, some of which you eat.

So you want the people to sin more and more.

⁹I will punish you priests just as I punish the people.

I will punish all of you for your behavior;

I will pay you all back for all the wicked deeds you have done.

¹⁰You all will eat, but you will never get enough. You will always be hungry.

They will continue to sleep with other women, but the women will not conceive,

because you have all abandoned me, Yahweh.

¹¹You love to do forbidden sexual acts,
and to drink wine and new wine.

All these things have made it impossible for you to know right from wrong.

¹²My own people pray to an idol made from a piece of wood.

They ask their walking staffs to tell them which way they should go!

They are always wanting to sin in sexual ways, so they have stopped obeying me, the God whom they should worship.

¹³They worship other gods in the places on the tops of the mountains where they have set up idols. They burn offerings to the idols up on those hills—

in all the places where they worship those idols—under the oak trees, poplar trees, and the terebinth trees—
because these trees give good shade.

Following your example, your daughters decided to become prostitutes,
and your daughters-in-law committed adultery.

¹⁴But I will not punish the women for turning to prostitution,
or your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery.

It is the men who are doing the very same thing!

The men sleep with prostitutes,
and they offer sacrifices in the houses of idols where there are prostitutes.

It is true: "A people who have not lived as they were taught to live, will come to destruction."

¹⁵Israel, you have left me and gone to idols.

But I hope that Judah will not do the same thing.

You people of Judah, do not go to Gilgal. Do not go up to Beth Aven to worship idols there.

Do not make solemn oaths, calling on me to make good on your promises, adding to your vows the words, 'As Yahweh lives!' ¹⁶Israel is as stubborn as a young cow.

Can I now feed them as if they were little lambs in a meadow?

¹⁷Ephraim has gone to join idols.

Leave those people alone! ¹⁸When they have finished drinking all their alcoholic drinks
then they will commit even more sexual sins.

Their rulers love to do these shameful things. ¹⁹Someone will attack them; he will be like a whirlwind that lifts them up and carries them away to another place.

Only then will they be ashamed because they gave offerings to the idols."

Chapter 5

¹"Listen, you priests!

Pay attention, you people of Israel!

And you members of the king's family, you also need to listen!

For I will punish all of you.

The things you have done have been like a trap for the people at Mizpah.

The things you have done have become like a net spread out to catch the people who live on Mount Tabor. ²Those who rebelled against me have now killed so many that they are standing deep in their blood. I tell you that I will punish them all.

³You, the people in Ephraim, the center of Israel—I know you.

I know very well what you are like, you people of Israel.

You people in Ephraim, you have acted like prostitutes.

Yes, you people in Israel are polluted.

⁴Ephraim and Israel are not able to ask me to forgive them, because of what they have done.

They have chosen to be unfaithful and immoral,

and they do not know me, Yahweh."

⁵Israel is proud; because of this others know how guilty she is.

The sins that the people of Israel have committed are making them faithless to Yahweh.

Judah is becoming faithless, too.

⁶They are hoping to persuade Yahweh to have mercy on them.

They are coming to sacrifice sheep and cattle to him from their flocks and herds.

But they will find that Yahweh will have no mercy on them

because he has stopped helping them; he is leaving them alone.

⁷They did not keep their promises to Yahweh.

and they have had children by foreign women.

So at the time of the new moon festivals,

they will perish, together with their cultivated fields."

⁸Yahweh says, "Blow the ram horns at the city of Gibeah!

Blow the trumpets at the city of Ramah!

Shout a battle cry at the city of Beth Aven!

Lead us into battle, you people of the tribe of Benjamin!

⁹I will punish the people of Ephraim and turn their city into a pile of rubble.

This is my promise to the tribes of Israel—I pledge to you all that I will do this.

¹⁰The leaders of Judah are as bad as people who steal farmland by moving boundary markers;
they steal land that does not belong to them.

I will punish them in a way that will make them perish.

¹¹Ephraim will suffer greatly; the people will perish when I punish them,
because they were determined to worship idols.

¹²I will destroy Ephraim as a moth destroys wool;
I will destroy Judah as rot destroys wood.

¹³When the people of Ephraim realized how weak they were,
then they asked the people of Assyria for help.

When the people of Judah realized how weak they were,
they sent messengers to the great king of Assyria.

But he could not help you people;
he could not make you people strong again.

¹⁴I will become like a lion to the people of Ephraim in Israel;
I will become like a young lion to the people of Judah.
I will destroy them and leave them;
I will carry them far away,
and no one will be able to rescue them.

¹⁵Then I will go back to where I came from;
from there I will wait for them to admit that they have sinned;
I will wait for them to come and ask me to help them.”

Chapter 6

¹The people say, “Come, let us return to Yahweh.
He has torn our flesh to pieces as a lion tears up his victim.
He did this, but he will heal our wounds.
He has hurt us and made us fall down,
but he will treat our wounds and bind them up so they will heal.

²After the second day he will restore our strength;
and on the third day he will raise us up,

so we will live close to him.

³Try to know Yahweh;

do all you can to be faithful to him.

It is as certain as tomorrow's sunrise

that he will come to us; he will come to us like the rain,

like the rain comes in the spring on our fields."

⁴But Yahweh says, "What can I do with you, you people of Ephraim?

What can I do with you, you people of the tribe of Judah?

You love me for just as long as the clouds come in the morning before they disappear again.

You love me for just as long as the dew stays before the warm sun shines on it.

⁵I sent my prophets to you,

and it was as though I had cut you into pieces when they spoke the messages I gave them.

You were devastated by what they said to you.

It was as though I had killed you with the words I spoke to you.

I spoke about how I would punish you.

I told you by the prophets that I was angry with you, and they told you this."

"Yahweh, you will punish them by commanding that it happen;

your words are like lightning bolts."

⁶Yahweh says, "I want you to be faithful to me forever.

I want that more than I want you to offer me sacrifices.

I want you to know me—that is much more important to me

than when you give me offerings that the priests burn on the altar.

⁷But like Adam, the first man,

the covenant that they made with me and that I, Yahweh, made with them—they broke it.

When they did that, they were not faithful to me.

⁸Gilead is a city of people who do wicked things;

in the streets of that city are the footprints of murderers.

⁹As robbers make their plans to hide and then rob someone walking past them,

so are the priests—they band together making their plans, just like the robbers,

and they commit murder along the way to Shechem.

They commit terrible crimes.

¹⁰Among the people of Israel, I have seen a horrible thing—
the people of Ephraim worship idols everywhere.

The people of Israel have become filthy by what they have done.

¹¹And for you also, you people of Judah,
I have set for you a time when I will separate out your good people from your bad people.
Just as in the harvest when you take all the crops in,
and you keep the good and throw away the bad,
that is what is coming for you, people of Judah.
That will be the day when I bring back the blessings and riches of my people once more.”

Chapter 7

¹As often as I try to heal Israel,
the people openly show that they are sinning,
and the people in the city of Samaria show the same thing.
They lie and cheat in their buying and selling;
they are like lawless men who attack people who are walking in the streets.
²But they do not take a moment to think that I, Yahweh, see everything they do.
Everywhere they go, they commit evil,
and I see it all.

³The wicked things they do bring delight to their king,
and the king's officials are happy when they tell lies.

⁴They are all sexually immoral;
they burn with lust like a baker's oven that is burning hot;
once he lights the fire, he does not need to put any more wood on it,
until he is ready to bake the bread.

⁵At the king's festivals, his officials do outrageous things because they are drunk with wine,
and the king joins in with them as they mock me.

⁶But these same officials then set about making plans to murder the king.
They are quietly angry all night,
and they are openly angry in the morning.

⁷All those officials become so angry at the king,

that they kill all their rulers.

In the end, all their kings were killed;

not one of them called on me, Yahweh, to help.”

⁸“Israel joins with other people groups,

but all the people are like a flat cake that is only cooked on one side; they are weak.

⁹People who come from far away have taken away Israel’s strength.

The nation is growing very weak, like an old man whose hair is turning gray.

But the nation does not know it is weak.

¹⁰Israel is so proud that everyone else sees it.

Even so, they will not return to me—to Yahweh their God.

They will not try to persuade me to have mercy on them, no matter what happens to them.

¹¹Israel is like a foolish bird, a dove that anyone can easily deceive.

He calls out first to Egypt, and then like a bird, he flies up to Assyria.

¹²But when they are on their way there,

I will spread my net over them,

I will bring them down as a hunter brings down birds from the air into a net.

I will punish them all together.

¹³How terrible it will be

for my people, because they have abandoned me!

They will perish

because they have rebelled against me.

I wanted to rescue them,

but they kept telling lies against me.

¹⁴They do not cry out to me; they do not call to me from their hearts;

they only lie on their beds and howl and cry out.

They meet together to ask their idols for their grain and new wine.

They have rebelled against me.

¹⁵Even though I trained them and helped them become strong,

even now they are planning to do evil against me.

¹⁶They go this way and that, but never to me, God Most High.

They are like a bow that cannot shoot.

Their officers will be killed by their enemies' swords; they will die because they have insulted me.
This is why the people in Egypt will insult them."

Chapter 8

¹Yahweh says, "Get a trumpet and blow it.

There are enemies swooping down over my people,
as an eagle swoops down over a victim.

This is because my people have left my covenant with them
and have violated the law I gave them.

²My people Israel cry out to me and say,
'Our God, we are loyal to you!'

³But the people of Israel have thrown away what is good,
so their enemies will chase after them.

⁴Israel has appointed kings for themselves,
but they did not consult with me about it.

They chose their own kings
without asking me to approve them.

They took their silver and gold and formed them into the idols they worshiped,

but the people will perish as a result." ⁵The prophet says, "Yes, Yahweh has rejected your idol, you people of Samaria—an idol made in the form of a calf!"

Yahweh says, "Perhaps these people will never again be innocent of evil-doing. I am very angry with them!

⁶The shame of it is that this idol came from Israel! A craftsman made it.

It is only an idol; it cannot be the true and living God!

I will ensure that someone will smash it to bits.

⁷This is because these people do useless things, so something terrible will destroy them.

Their grain standing in the fields will give no harvest.

And even if it does, foreign soldiers will eat everything it produces.

⁸Other nations have destroyed Israel's power.

Now Israel is like an old, broken pot that no one wants.

⁹They asked the king of Assyria for help;

they were like a wild donkey wandering off by itself.

The people of Israel have tried to pay other nations to protect them.

¹⁰Although they do this,

I will soon gather them up to destroy them.

They will begin to become poor because they will have to pay money to Assyria's king.

¹¹The people of Ephraim have built many altars on which to offer sacrifices for their sins;

however, these altars have become places where the people commit terrible sins against me.

¹²Even if I wrote out for the people of Israel my laws ten thousand times,

they would refuse to obey them.

They would say they had never heard of them.

¹³Let us think about the sacrifices that they give to me.

They sacrifice the meat and then they eat it;

but I, Yahweh, am not pleased with those sacrifices.

I will think about their sins and will punish the people for them.

I will make them go back to Egypt.

¹⁴And why has this happened?

The people of Israel have forgotten me, the God who made them a nation. Instead of honoring me, they have built huge homes to live in.

And instead of worshiping Yahweh, the people of Judah have built walls around their cities for protection.

So this is what I, Yahweh, will do:

I will send a fire that will destroy all their palaces and all their fortified cities."

Chapter 9

¹Hosea says this: Do not be happy, O Israel; do not celebrate like other people groups!

You have been unfaithful to your God. You have refused to do what he told you.

At every place where people thresh their grain,

you give your offerings and sacrifices to idols.

You are just like men who pay money to sleep with women.

²Now you will not have enough grain or wine to feed your people.

You will have no hope for any new wine, for the vines will fail you.

³The people of Israel will not continue to live in the land that Yahweh has chosen as his own.

Instead, they will go back to Egypt one day.

And in Assyria they will have to eat the kind of food that God had forbidden them to eat.

⁴No longer will they pour out wine to offer it to Yahweh;

their sacrifices will not please him at all.

Their sacrifices will be as unacceptable to God as the food that people eat at funerals;

and everyone who eats that food becomes unacceptable to God.

That food will be all they eat;

they will not be able to bring it into Yahweh's house to offer it to him.

⁵There, in a country far from your home, you will not be able to celebrate the festivals that Yahweh commanded you to celebrate.

⁶Look! If you escape and the Assyrians do not kill you,

the army of Egypt will capture you.

You will die there, and the people in the city of Memphis will bury you.

All your wealth in silver will be covered up

and lost when the desert plants grow into your homes and take them over.

⁷It is now the time for God to punish you;

the time has come in which God will pay you back for every sin you have committed.

And all you people of Israel must realize that these things will happen.

So your false prophets are fools,

and those who you thought were inspired by God are actually insane.

This is because you have sinned so much

and because you have become Yahweh's enemies.

⁸True prophets are people whom God has assigned to guard the people of Israel.

But everywhere they go, others set traps for them;

even in the temple of their God, others hate them.

⁹The people have polluted themselves by sinning

as the Israelites did at Gibeah long ago.

God will not forget the wicked things they did;

he will certainly punish them.

¹⁰Yahweh says, "When I found Israel, it was like someone finding grapes growing in the wilderness.

When I saw your ancestors, they were like the very first figs that appear in the year, figs growing on a young fig tree.

But when they came to Mount Peor,

they gave themselves completely to that disgusting idol Baal,

and they became as detestable as the idol they loved.

¹¹The honor of Ephraim is like a bird that is flying away.

I will make their women so they cannot give birth, no woman will be pregnant, and no one will even conceive a child in the womb.

¹²Even if they raise children not their own,

I will take them from their mothers.

It will be the worst that could happen to them,

when I abandon them!

¹³I have seen the people of Israel;

they were like Tyre; they were like a tree planted in a beautiful meadow.

But they will have to lead their own children out to their enemies, who will slaughter them.”

¹⁴Hosea says, Yahweh, give them—

what should you give them?

Give them wombs that miscarry,

and let their mothers’ breasts have no milk for their babies.

¹⁵Yahweh says, “Because of all the wicked things my people did at Gilgal,

that is where I started to hate them.

And because of all the sinful deeds they have done,

I will drive them out of the place they live.

I will not love them any more;

all their officials fight against me.

¹⁶Ephraim is like a vine that has dried up

and produces no fruit.

Even if they give birth,

I will put to death those children they love.”

¹⁷Hosea says, My God rejected the people of Israel

because they have not obeyed him,

and they will wander from one nation to another.

Chapter 10

¹Israel is like a vine

that produces many bundles of grapes.

But the more their fruit increased, the richer they became.

With that money they made more stone columns in honor of their idols.

²They are deceitful and cannot be trusted;

but the time has come that they must pay for their sins.

Yahweh will break their altars into pieces—

the places where they gave sacrifices to their idols,

and he promises to destroy those pillars beside which they worshiped their false gods.

³They say, "We have no king now because we did not honor or respect Yahweh.

But even if we had a king,

how could a king help us?"

⁴The people of Israel make lying promises and false covenants;

and because their promises are not kept,

their sort of justice kills people, as poisonous weeds in a field would do.

⁵Those people of Samaria tremble with fear because of what happened to the calf idols at Beth Aven.

Those people mourn over what happened to those idols,

as did the priests who served them;

they rejoiced over them and praised their splendor,

but now those idols have been taken away from them.

⁶Their idols will be carried to Assyria

to be a gift for the great king.

The people of Israel will be disgraced;

they will be ashamed

for having trusted in the advice they received by consulting idols.

⁷The king of Samaria will die.

He will be like a small piece of wood that floats away down a stream.

⁸The hilltop places known for their wickedness—altars where the people worshiped idols—will all be destroyed.

Thorns and thistles will grow and cover all the altars that were in Samaria.

The people will beg the mountains and say,

"Cover us!"

and to the hills, "Fall on us!"

⁹People of Israel, since the days of Gibeah you have been sinning;

it is as if you have been living there ever since then, because you think as they did.

Enemies will attack you evildoers at Gibeah.

¹⁰Yahweh says, "When I decide to act, I will punish them.

People groups will gather to fight against them;

those people groups will capture them and put them in chains

because of their many sins.

¹¹Ephraim is like a trained calf

that loves to thresh grain, separating out the grain from the chaff,

and I did not put a heavy yoke on her tender neck.

But now I will put Ephraim under that yoke,

and Judah must plow.

and Jacob must break up the ground with the harrow.

¹²Plow, now, and do what is right,

and you will reap the fruit of faithful love.

Do the hard work of breaking up the unplowed ground,

for now is the time for you to ask Yahweh to have mercy on you,

so that he may come and rescue you because he does what is right.

¹³You have sinned wickedly, and now you will have to bear the consequences.

You told lies, and now you must suffer the results of the lies you told.

You have trusted in your own abilities and wisdom,

and you have relied on the soldiers in your armies.

¹⁴The sound of war will be among your people;

all your fortified cities will be destroyed.

It will be as when Shalman destroyed Beth Arbel in battle,

when mothers were killed while they were holding their children.

¹⁵That is what will be done to you, you people of the city of Bethel,

because of all the evil things you have done.

When the battle begins at dawn,

the king of Israel will be destroyed; the enemy will kill him."

Chapter 11

¹Yahweh says, "When the nation of Israel was like a young man, I loved him.

He was like a son to me, whom I called out of Egypt.

²But the more I called out to them,
the more they ran away.

Day after day they offered their sacrifices to the idols named Baal,
and they burned incense to honor them.

³But it was I who taught them to do everything good, as a father teaches his son to walk.
I was like a father, holding them by their little arms.
But they did not understand that I was the one who was taking care of them.

⁴With kindness I guided them, with the tender cords of human kindness I led them.
I loved them so much that I guided them and led by my own hand.

They worked very hard, like a yoke of oxen pulling a plow, but I made their yoke light and loosened its weight on their jaws, so they did not suffer pain.

⁵But Israel will certainly return to Egypt,
and Assyria will certainly rule over them,
because they refused to turn back to me and worship me as their God.

⁶Their enemies will attack Israel's cities with swords;
their enemies will destroy the bars that keep their gates closed and safe.
Their enemies will destroy the people of Israel and put an end to all the plans they made.

⁷My people are determined to turn away from me.
They pretend to call out to me, the Most High God,
but I will allow no one to help them.

⁸But you people of Israel—dear Israel—I cannot abandon you.
I cannot give you over to your enemies.
I do not want to act toward you as I acted toward Admah or make you like Zeboyim—
cities that I destroyed along with Sodom.

I have changed my mind about punishing you;
I earnestly long to have mercy on you.

⁹I have decided not to punish you severely.
I do not want to destroy you, the people of my Israel, whom I love.
Human beings would easily decide to do that,
but I am God, not human.

I am the Holy One who lives among you;

I will not come to you and be angry with you.

¹⁰They will live their lives following my commands.

I will roar like a lion.

And when I roar, my people will hear and will come trembling.

They will come back to me from far away—

from the west they will come back to me.

¹¹They will come fluttering into the land

like a flock of birds coming up from Egypt.

And some will be like pigeons that fly in from Assyria.

I will let them live in their own homes once more, in the land of Israel.

I, Yahweh, have promised this.”

¹²“The people of Israel have continually lied to me.

But the people of Judah they still obey me and are faithful to me, the Holy One.”

Chapter 12

¹The people of Israel do only what is useless;

they do only things that will destroy them.

They tell more and more lies; they do more and more acts of violence.

They make a treaty with Assyria,

and they send olive oil to Egypt,

to persuade those nations to protect them.

²Yahweh is also accusing the people of Judah of breaking his covenant.

He will punish those descendants of Jacob for what they have done.

He will pay them back; he will give them what they deserve.

³When Jacob was in his mother’s womb, he grabbed his brother Esau’s heel because he wanted to take his brother’s place and be the firstborn.

When Jacob grew up, he wrestled with God.

⁴When the angel appeared to him, he struggled with him and won.

Jacob cried out to the angel and begged him to bless him.

Jacob found Yahweh at Bethel;

it was there that Yahweh spoke with him.

⁵This is Yahweh, the God of the angel armies!

"Yahweh" is the name by which we should worship him.

⁶Turn to your God!

Obey his covenant and do what is right.

Never stop trusting in your God for him to help you.

⁷The merchants are wicked; they use scales that give wrong weights and measures, so they can cheat those who buy from them.

⁸The people of Israel boast,

"We are very rich,

and we have found ways to make ourselves even more wealthy than we are now.

In all our buying and selling, no one can see anything wrong in what we do."

⁹But Yahweh says, "I am Yahweh, whom you should worship;

I am the one who brought your ancestors out of Egypt.

I will force you away from your homes and make you live in tents again,

just as when you live in tents for a few days every year

when you celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁰Many times I spoke to the prophets and gave them messages, for them to give to you;

and I gave them many visions for you,

and I gave them parables, for them to speak to you."

¹¹The prophet says that if it is true that the people in the region of Gilead are wicked,

then surely they are also worthless!

In Gilgal they kill bulls and offer them to their idols;

but these altars will be pulled down and turned into piles of stones in their fields.

¹²Jacob fled to the land of Aram;

he, whose name God would later change to Israel, worked many years so he could marry a woman.

He took care of his uncle's sheep in order to marry her.

¹³Yahweh used the prophet Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt,

and he took care of them by the prophet who led them.

¹⁴The people of Israel have caused Yahweh to become very angry;

their Lord says that they are guilty of the death of many, and that their guilt remains on them.

He will pay them back because they have insulted him with their shameful deeds.

Chapter 13

¹Yahweh says, "When the leaders of Israel spoke, the people trembled;
they were respected in Israel.

But because they all worshiped Baal, they became guilty,
and they died.

²Now they sin more and more;
they make cast metal figures out of silver
to make them their idols.

Those idols are statues that are very cleverly made,
but those statues are made only by craftsmen.

But other people see
that the men of Israel sacrifice to these calf-idols and kiss them to worship them.

³So the people of Israel will disappear
as quickly as the clouds that form in the morning,
as quickly as the dew, when the sun dries it up.
They will disappear as easily as the chaff that the wind blows away from the threshing place.
They will disappear as easily as the smoke that goes out of the chimney.

⁴But I am Yahweh, whom you should worship;
I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt.
You must worship no other God; you must worship only Me.
There is no one else who can rescue you.

⁵I took charge of you in the wilderness,
in a desert where there was no water to drink.

⁶When I provided food for you,
you ate as much as you wanted and were satisfied.
But when you were no longer hungry, you became proud
and forgot about me.

⁷So I will attack you like a lion;
I will attack you like a leopard that waits beside the road to suddenly jump on a traveler.

⁸I will come against you like a female bear when someone steals her cubs,
and I will rip open your chests.

Like a lion that attacks—

as a wild animal would tear you apart.

⁹You people of Israel, I will destroy you.

No one will be able to help you.

¹⁰You no longer have any king

who can save you in any of your cities.

You no longer have any of the rulers whom you asked me to give you.

¹¹When I gave you a king, I gave him to you because I was angry with you.

And because I was angry with you, I took your kings away.

¹²I have kept track of all the wicked deeds that you people of Israel have committed; I have recorded all your guilt.

¹³You are like a baby ready to be born,

but you are foolish,

because you are like a child who refuses to be born.

¹⁴Will I really keep you from dying?

Will I rescue you from dying?

No! I will let you die

I will let you perish.

I have no more compassion left for you.”

¹⁵The prophet Hosea says: “Even though you people of Israel are wealthier than those of Judah,

the day is coming when Yahweh will destroy you.

You will meet disaster.

Your enemies will take everything valuable away from you.

¹⁶The people of the city of Samaria are guilty because they have rebelled against God.

Their enemies will kill them with swords.

they will throw their children far down to the ground and kill them;

they will rip open their pregnant women.”

Chapter 14

¹Israel, return to Yahweh your God!

You have sinned because you have done wicked things.

²So now, return to Yahweh, and think about how you will confess your sins to him.

Say this to him:

“Take away all our sins,

and accept us; please be kind to us.

Please accept us back, so that we may praise you in our words and song.

³Assyria cannot save us.

It is useless for us to ride horses into battle.

We will never again say, ‘You are our gods’

to the idols we have made with our own hands.

Even children with no fathers look to you, Yahweh, and they find that you are kind to them.”

⁴Yahweh says, “I will forgive these people for having stopped honoring me;

I will love them without ceasing,

because I have decided to stop being angry at them.

⁵I will help the people of Israel as the dew helps the ground.

They will prosper like the lilies bloom.

They will become as strong as the cedar trees in Lebanon.

⁶They will be like trees whose branches spread out.

They will be as beautiful as the olive trees,

and they will please others as much as the fragrant cedar trees in Lebanon.

⁷They will return and live under the protection that Israel has from me;

I will protect them from hardship.

They will be successful like a field of grain that grows well, like grapevines that are growing well.

They will become as famous as the wine that people produce in the land of Lebanon.

⁸You people of Israel, I will completely stop you from worshiping idols.

It is I, Yahweh, who will take care of you. No idol can do that.

I am like a cypress tree that grows and stays fresh the entire year;

all your good gifts come from me.”

⁹Every wise person will understand the things about which I have written;

those who have understanding will study these things and pay careful attention to them.

The way in which Yahweh wants us to live is right.

Those who do what is right live by them.

The rebellious people, however, sin, unable to obey him.

Joel

Chapter 1

¹I am Joel son of Pethuel. This is a message that Yahweh gave to me.

²You leaders of Israel, and everyone else who lives in this country, listen to this message!

Nothing like this has ever happened during the time that we have lived
or during the time when our ancestors lived.

³Tell your children about it,
and tell your children to tell it to their children,
and tell your grandchildren to tell it to their children.

⁴I am talking about the locusts that have eaten our crops.
The first swarm of locusts came and cut many of the leaves of the crops;
then another swarm came and ate the rest of the leaves,
then another swarm came hopping along,
and finally another swarm came
and they destroyed everything else.

⁵You people who are drunk, wake up!
Wake up and wail loudly,
because all the grapes are ruined,
and so there will be no new wine!

⁶Huge swarms of locusts have entered our country.
They are like a powerful army
that has very many soldiers;
no one can count them.

The locusts have teeth that are as sharp as the teeth of lions!

⁷They have destroyed our grapevines and our fig trees
by stripping off and eating all the bark,
with the result that the branches are white and bare.

⁸Cry and wail as a young woman does
when the young man to whom she was engaged has died.

⁹There is no more flour or wine for us to offer to be sacrifices at the temple,
so the priests who serve Yahweh are mourning.

¹⁰The crops in the fields have been ruined;
it is as though the ground itself had died.
The grain has been destroyed,
there are no grapes to make wine,
and there is no more olive oil.

¹¹You farmers, grieve!
You who take care of grapevines, wail,
because the grain has been destroyed;
there is no wheat or barley growing.

¹²The grapevines and the fig trees have withered,
and the pomegranate trees, palm trees, and apricot trees have also dried up.
The people are no longer joyful.

¹³You priests, put on rough sack clothes and wail.
You who serve God by offering sacrifices on the altar,
wear those sack clothes all night to show that you are mourning,
because there is no flour or wine to be offered at the temple of your God.

¹⁴Set apart a day for when the people should go without food.
Tell the leaders and the other people to gather at the temple
and to cry out to Yahweh there.

¹⁵Terrible things are happening to us!
It will soon be the time when Yahweh, who is the Almighty God, will punish us,
when he will cause us to experience more disasters.

¹⁶Our crops are already gone,
and no one is rejoicing at all at the temple of our God.

¹⁷When we plant seeds, they do not grow;
they dry up in the ground,
so there are no crops to harvest.
Our barns are empty;
there is no grain to store in them.

¹⁸Our cattle groan, searching for a pasture with some grass to eat,
and the sheep bleat because they are suffering.

¹⁹Yahweh, I cry out to you,
because our pastures and our forests have dried up in the hot sunshine.

²⁰It is as though even the wild animals cry out to you
because all the streams have dried up.

The dryness is like a fire burning up the wilderness pastures.

Chapter 2

¹Blow trumpets on Mount Zion,
God's sacred hill in Jerusalem!
Tell the people of Judah that they should be afraid and tremble,
because it will soon be the time for Yahweh to punish us further.

²That will be a very dark and gloomy day;
there will be black clouds and it will be very dark.
A huge swarm of locusts has covered the mountains like a black cloud.
Nothing like this has ever happened before,
and nothing like this will ever happen again.

³It is as though they bring flames of fire
from which no one can escape.
In front of them, the land was as beautiful as the garden of Eden,
but behind them the land is like a desert,
and nothing survives.

⁴The locusts resemble horses,
and they run like soldiers on horses.

⁵Leaping over the mountaintops,
they make a noise like rumbling chariots,
like a mighty army that is preparing for a battle,
or like the roar of a fire that burns up stubble in a field.

⁶When people see them coming,
they become very pale and frightened.

⁷The locusts climb over walls like soldiers do;
they march along in columns
and never turn aside from their lines.

⁸They rush straight ahead
without pushing each other.
Even though people throw spears and javelins at them,
that will not cause them to stop.

⁹They swarm over the city walls and enter our houses;
they enter through our windows as thieves do.

¹⁰It is as though they cause the earth to shake and the sky to tremble.
The sun and the moon become dark,
and the stars do not shine
because there are so many locusts in the sky.

¹¹Yahweh leads this army of countless locusts,
and they obey his commands.
This time when he is judging and punishing us is very terrible,
with the result that it seems that no one can survive it.

¹²But Yahweh says,
"In spite of these disasters that you have experienced,
you can return to me with all your inner being.
Weep, and mourn, and fast to show that you are sorry that you have abandoned me.

¹³Do not tear only your clothes
to show that you are sorry;
more importantly, show in your inner being that you are sorry."
Yahweh is merciful and kind;
he does not quickly become angry;
he faithfully loves people.
He does not quickly become angry;
instead, he greatly and faithfully loves you,
and he does not like to punish us.

¹⁴No one knows if he will change his mind about punishing you

and instead act mercifully toward you.

If he does that, he will bless you

by giving you plenty of grain and wine

in order that you can offer some of those things for sacrifices to him.

15 Blow the trumpets on Mount Zion!

Gather the people together!

Set apart time to fast, to show that you are sorry for your sins.

16 Perform the rituals to cause yourselves to be acceptable to Yahweh.

Come apart and join together as a group with a purpose—

the old people and the children, even the babies,

and summon brides and bridegrooms from their rooms.

17 Tell the priests who serve Yahweh to cry between the altar and the entrance to the temple and to pray this:

“Yahweh, rescue us, your people;

do not allow people from other nations to despise us;

do not allow them to ridicule us and say,

‘Why has their God abandoned them?’”

18 But Yahweh showed that he was concerned about his people and that he would act mercifully toward them.

19 When the people prayed,

Yahweh answered and said,

“I will give you plenty of grain and wine and olive oil,

and you will be satisfied.

I will no longer allow other nations to insult you.

20 Another army of locusts will come from the north to attack you, but I will force them to continue past Jerusalem into the desert.

Some will go into the Dead Sea in the east,

and some will go into the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

There they will all die, and their bodies will stink.”

God will certainly do wonderful things.

²¹Yahweh will indeed do wonderful things!

So even the ground should rejoice!

²²And the wild animals should not be afraid,
because the meadows will soon become green again;
the fig trees and other trees will be full of fruit,
and the grapevines will be covered with grapes.

²³You people of Jerusalem,
rejoice about what Yahweh, your God, will do for you.
He will send abundant rain at the right time—
in the spring and in the autumn,
as he did previously.

²⁴The ground where you thresh the grain will be covered with grain,
and your vats where you store the fresh grape juice and olive oil will overflow.

²⁵Yahweh said, "I will repay you for everything that was destroyed by those great swarms of locusts,
that enormous army that I sent to attack you.

²⁶You, my people, will eat until your stomachs are full.
Then you will praise me, Yahweh, your God,
for the wonderful things that I have done for you.
And never again will I let others shame you.

²⁷When that happens, you will know that I am always among you,
that I am Yahweh, your God,
and that there is no other God.
Never again will I let others shame you."

²⁸"Some time later, I will give my Spirit to many people.
You sons and daughters will proclaim messages that come directly from me.
Your old men will have dreams that come from me,
and your young men will have visions that come from me.

²⁹At that time, I will give my Spirit even to servants, both men and women.

³⁰I will do unusual things on the earth and in the sky.
On the earth, there will be much blood shed,
and there will be very large fires and smoke that resembles huge clouds.

³¹In the sky, the sun will become dark, and the moon will become as red as blood.

Those things will happen before that great and terrible day when I, Yahweh, come to judge all people.

³²But at that time I will save everyone who worships me.

I promise that some people in Jerusalem will escape those disasters;

those whom I have chosen will survive.”

Chapter 3

¹Yahweh says this:

“At that time, I will bring back the people whom their enemies took away from Jerusalem and from other places in Judah.

²Then in the Valley of Jehoshaphat I will gather together the people of all the other nations;

I will judge and punish them

because they scattered my Israelite people

and forced them to go to other countries,

and because they divided up my land among themselves.

³They played games of chance to determine who would get each of my people.

Then they sold some of the Israelite boys and girls

to get money to pay for prostitutes and wine to drink.

⁴You people of the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and you people of Philistia—you are angry at me, but you have no reason to be. If you are trying to get revenge on me, I will very quickly get revenge on you. ⁵You took the silver and gold and other valuable things from my temple and put them into your own temples. ⁶You dragged away the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, and you took them far away and sold them to Greek traders.

⁷But I will make it possible for my people to return from the places to which you sold them, and I will do to you what you did to them. ⁸Then I will cause some of your sons and your daughters to be sold to the people of Judah! And they will be sold to the Sabea people group, who live far away. That will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

⁹Proclaim to the people of all nations,

“Prepare for a war!

Summon your soldiers;

tell them to stand in their battle positions.

¹⁰Take your plows and make swords from them;

take your pruning knives and make spears from them.

Even the weak people must also say they are strong soldiers.

¹¹All you people from the nations that are near Judah

must come quickly and gather there.”

But Yahweh, when that happens, send your army of angels to attack them!

¹²Yahweh says, “The people in the nations near Judah must get ready and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

There I will sit as a judge, and I will punish them.

¹³They are like crops that are ready to be harvested;

so strike them as a farmer swings his sickle to cut the grain.

They are like grapes that are piled high in the pits where they will be pressed;

because they are very wicked,

punish them severely now,

as a farmer tramples on the grapes until the pits overflow with juice.”

¹⁴There will be the noise of huge crowds of people in that Valley of Judgment.

It will soon be the time that Yahweh will punish them.

¹⁵At that time there will be no light from the sun or moon,

and the stars will not shine.

¹⁶From Mount Zion in Jerusalem Yahweh will shout;

his voice will be like thunder,

and his voice will cause the sky and the earth to shake.

But Yahweh will protect his people;

he will be like a strong wall behind which the people of Israel will be protected.

¹⁷Yahweh says, “At that time, you Israelite people will know that I am Yahweh, your God.

I live on Zion, the hill I have set apart for myself.

Jerusalem will be a city very special to me,

and soldiers from other countries will never conquer it again.

¹⁸At that time, there will be vineyards covering the hills,

and your cattle and goats on those hills will produce plenty of milk.

The streams in Judah will never dry up,

And a stream will flow from my temple into the Valley of Acacia northeast of the Dead Sea.

¹⁹The armies of Egypt and Edom attacked the people of Judah

and killed many people who had not done anything that was wrong.

So now those countries will be ruined, with no one living there any longer.

²⁰But there will always be people living in Jerusalem and in other places in Judea.

²¹I, Yahweh, live on Mount Zion in Jerusalem,
and I will get revenge on the people of Egypt and Edom who killed many of my people.”

Amos

Chapter 1

¹This is the message that Yahweh gave to Amos. He was one of the shepherds near the town of Tekoa south of Jerusalem. He received this message about Israel in a vision two years before the big earthquake. It was when Uzziah was the king of Judah and Jeroboam son of King Jehoash, was the king of Israel.

²Amos said:

“Yahweh will shout very loudly;

when he speaks from Mount Zion in Jerusalem, his voice will sound like thunder.

When that happens, the pastures where you shepherds take care of your sheep will dry up,

and the grass on top of Mount Carmel will wither

because Yahweh will order the rain not to fall.”

³This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Aram:

“I will not change my mind about punishing the people of Damascus, the capital of Aram, because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because of the cruel things that they did to the people of the region of Gilead.

⁴I will cause a fire to burn the palace that King Hazael built and lived in.

It will consume the fortresses where his son King Ben Hadad also lived.

⁵I will cause the gates of Damascus to be broken down;

I will get rid of the king of Biqat Aven

and the man who rules in Beth Eden.

The people of Aram will be captured and taken to the region of Kir.” Yahweh has declared this, so it will certainly happen.

⁶This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Philistia:

“

I will not change my mind about punishing the people of Gaza because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they captured large groups of people and took them to Edom

and sold them to become the slaves of the people there.

⁷I will cause a fire to completely burn the walls of Gaza

and also destroy its fortresses.

⁸I will get rid of the king of the city of Ashdod
and the king who rules in the city of Ashkelon.

I will also strike the people of the city of Ekron,

and all the people of Philistia who are still alive will be killed.” The Lord Yahweh has declared this, so it will certainly happen.

⁹This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Tyre:

“I will not change my mind about punishing the people of Tyre because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them

because they also captured large groups of our people and took them to Edom,

In doing so, they did not act in accordance with the treaty of friendship that they had made with your rulers.

¹⁰So I will cause a fire to completely burn the walls of Tyre

and also destroy its fortresses.”

¹¹This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Edom:

“I will not change my mind about punishing the people of Edom because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they pursued the people of Israel, who descended from Esau’s brother Jacob, and killed them with swords;

they did not act mercifully toward them at all.

They were extremely angry with the people of Israel,

and they continue to be angry with them.

¹²I will cause a fire to burn the district of Teman in Edom

and completely burn the fortresses of Bozrah, the biggest city in Edom.”

¹³This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Ammon:

“I will not change my mind about punishing the people of Ammon because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because their soldiers even ripped open the bellies of pregnant women

when their army attacked the region of Gilead to order to gain more territory.

¹⁴I will cause a fire to completely burn the walls of the city of Rabbah

and to completely burn its fortresses.

During that battle, their enemies will shout loudly

and the fighting will be like a great storm.

¹⁵After the battle, the king of Ammon and his officials will together go into exile." Yahweh has declared this, so it will certainly happen.

Chapter 2

¹This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Moab:

"I will punish the people of Moab because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they dug up the bones of the king of Edom and burned them completely,

with the result that the ashes became as white as lime.

²So I will cause a fire to completely burn the fortresses of the city of Kerioth in Moab. People will hear soldiers shouting and blowing trumpets loudly while I am causing Moab to be destroyed. ³I will destroy the king inside the city, and I will kill all his nobles.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

⁴This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Judah:

"I will punish the people of Judah because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they have rejected what I taught them

and they have not obeyed my commands.

They have been deceived and persuaded to worship false gods,

the same gods that their ancestors worshiped.

⁵So I will cause a fire to completely burn everything in Judah, including the fortresses in Jerusalem."

⁶This is what Yahweh has declared regarding the people of Israel:

"I will punish the people of Israel because of the many sins that they have committed.

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because the wealthy landowners and merchants sell into slavery innocent people for a small profit

and poor people for the cheap price of a pair of sandals.

⁷It is as though they trample the needy into the dirt

and do not treat the helpless fairly.

Men and their fathers dishonor me by sleeping with the same slave girl.

⁸Furthermore, the rich lenders refuse to return to the poor the garments taken as a pledge at the end of the day as commanded in the law. The poor are left with no blankets to sleep with, while the rich lay on those garment pledges beside the altars where they worship their false gods. They buy wine with the interest they charge, and then they drink it in the temples of their false gods. ⁹Long ago, to assist your ancestors, I got rid of the Amor people group.

They seemed to be as tall as cedar trees
and as strong as oak trees,
but I got rid of them completely,
as easily as someone cuts off the branches of a tree and then digs out all the roots.

¹⁰I brought your ancestors out of Egypt,
and then I led them through the desert for forty years.
Then I enabled them to conquer the land of the Amorites, Canaan.

¹¹I chose some of you Israelites to be prophets,
and I chose others to be Nazir who were completely dedicated to me.
You people of Israel certainly know that what I, Yahweh, have declared will happen!

¹²But you commanded the prophets to not speak the messages that I gave to them,
and you persuaded the Nazir to drink wine,
which I told them never to do.

¹³So I will crush you
as the wheels of a wagon that is loaded with grain crushes whatever it rolls over.

¹⁴Even if you run fast,
you will not escape;
even if you are strong, it will be as though you are weak,
and warriors will be unable to save themselves.

¹⁵Even if you are able to shoot arrows well,
you will not survive;
even if you run fast or if you ride away on a horse,
you will not be able to save yourself.

¹⁶Even warriors who are very brave will drop their weapons
when they try to flee on the day that I get rid of them.”
Yahweh has declared this, so it will certainly happen!

Chapter 3

¹“You people of Israel, I brought all your ancestors out of Egypt;
so listen to what I am saying about you.

²From all the people groups on the earth,

I chose and took care of only you.

That is the reason that I will punish you
for the sins that you have committed."

³Two people certainly cannot walk together
if they have not already agreed what place they will start walking from.

⁴A lion in a forest certainly does not roar
if it has not killed another animal.
It does not growl in its den
if it is not eating the flesh of an animal that it has caught.

⁵No one can catch a bird
if he does not set a trap for it.
A trap does not spring shut
when some animal has not sprung the trap.

⁶Similarly, all the people in a city certainly become afraid
when they hear someone blowing a horn
to signal that enemies are attacking.
And when a city experiences disaster,
Yahweh is the one who has caused it.

⁷For Yahweh the Lord does nothing without first disclosing his secret plans to the prophets, his servants. ⁸Everyone
certainly becomes terrified when they hear a lion roar;
Yahweh the Lord has given messages to his prophets,
and that is why I am proclaiming his message to you,
even though it may terrify you.

⁹Proclaim to the people in the strongholds in Ashdod,
and to the people in the fortresses in the land of Egypt say this:
"Come together on the hills of Samaria,
and see how much the people in that city are frightened,
and see the way the people are suffering because of what they are doing to each other!"

¹⁰The people there do not know how to do things that are right. They have filled their fortresses with valuable
things they stole or took violently from others." Yahweh has declared this.

¹¹Therefore Yahweh our Lord has declared this: "Doom is coming! Soon their enemies will come into their land
and tear down their defenses

and take away those valuable things.

¹²Yahweh has declared this:

“When a lion attacks a sheep,

sometimes a shepherd is able to snatch from the lion's mouth

only two legs or an ear of the sheep.

Similarly, only a few people from Samaria will escape,

just as if someone could save only a part of a couch or a bed from a fire in the house.”

¹³Yahweh our Lord, the commander of the angel armies, has declared this:

“Proclaim this message about the descendants of Jacob:

¹⁴For on the day of judgment when I punish the people of Israel

because of the sins that they have committed,

I will destroy the altars at the town of Bethel;

even the projections at the corners of the altars will break and fall to the ground.

¹⁵I will cause the houses that they live in during the winter to be torn down;

and the houses they live in during the summer, they will also be torn down.

Beautiful big houses and houses that are decorated with ivory will be destroyed.”

Yahweh has declared this, so it will certainly happen!

Chapter 4

¹Listen up, you wealthy women of Samaria! You have gorged yourselves on luxuries and grown fat like the cows of the region of Bashan.

You oppress poor people,

and you cause needy people to suffer.

And you say to your husbands,

“Bring us more wine to drink!”

²But Yahweh our God has said this:

“Because I am holy, I solemnly promise this:

It will soon be the time when you all will be taken to another country;

your enemies will take you away using sharp hooks to grab you.

³Your enemies will drag you out

and you will go through breaks in your city walls,

and they will force you to go toward Harmon.”

Yahweh has declared this, so it will certainly happen.

⁴Go ahead: go to the hilltop places of idol worship that are at Bethel and Gilgal, where many people worship me; go and rebel more and more against me!

Offer sacrifices on the morning after you arrive,
and bring me a tenth of your crops the next day.

⁵Bring offerings of bread to thank me,
and other offerings that are not required,
and boast about these offerings that you bring,
because that is what you like to do;
but you do it to impress others, not to please me."

Yahweh the Lord has declared this.

⁶"What's more, I am the one who caused there to be no food in any of your cities and towns, yet you did not return to me." declares Yahweh.

⁷Furthermore, when it was still three months before the time of harvesting crops,
at the time when your crops needed rain the most,
I prevented rain from falling.

Sometimes I allowed rain to fall on some towns
and prevented it from falling on other towns.

Rain fell on some fields,
but it did not fall on other fields,
with the result that the soil in those fields where it did not rain dried up.

⁸Your people would stagger from one town to another town to find water,
but they could not even get enough water to drink.

Yet, you did not return to me." declares Yahweh. ⁹Many times I struck your crops with disease and mildew.

The locusts devoured your gardens and vineyards,
your fig trees and olive trees, yet you did not return to me." declares Yahweh.

¹⁰I caused you to experience plagues
like the plagues that I sent to the people of Egypt.
I caused many of your young men to die in battles.
and allowed your enemies to capture your horses.
Many of your soldiers were killed,
and your camps were filled with the smell of their corpses.

Yet, you did not return to me.” declares Yahweh. ¹¹I got rid of many of you,
like the people in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Those of you who did not die were like a burning stick that was snatched from a fire so that it would not burn completely.

Yet, you did not return to me.” declares Yahweh.

¹²So now, you people of Israel, I am going to punish you.

Prepare to stand in front of me, your God, when I judge you!

¹³So, listen! I created the mountains,
and the winds.

I reveal to humans what I am thinking.

and sometimes cause the daylight to become dark like the night.

I rule over everything,

and even walk on the highest mountains on the earth!

I am Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!”

Chapter 5

¹You people of Israel, listen to this funeral song that I will sing about you:

²“You are like a young woman,
but in spite of that, you will certainly be struck down
and you will never get up again!
You will lie on the ground, abandoned,
and there will be no one to help you stand up.”

³This is what Yahweh the Lord has declared to the people of Israel:

“When your enemies attack you,
and when a thousand of your soldiers go into battle,
only a hundred will survive.
When a hundred soldiers march out from a city to fight,
only ten will remain alive.”

⁴This is what Yahweh has declared to the people of Israel:

“You Israelite people, return to me!
If you do that, you will continue to remain alive.

⁵Do not go to Bethel to seek my help;

do not go to Gilgal to worship;
do not go to Beersheba,
because your enemies will drag away the people of Gilgal to other countries,
and they will completely destroy Bethel."

⁶So come to Yahweh;
if you do that, you will remain alive.
If you do not do that,
Yahweh will come down on you descendants of Joseph like a fire;
that fire will burn everything in Bethel
and nothing will be able to save that town.

⁷You people distort what is right; you make others think that it is something very bitter;
you treat good things as though they were evil.

⁸God created all the groups of stars
and he put them in their places.
Each morning he causes the darkness to become the dawn,
and each evening he causes the daylight to become darkness.
He scoops up water from the oceans to become clouds,
and then he dumps the water from the clouds onto the earth.
The one who does those things is Yahweh.

⁹He brings sudden destruction on the rulers and the wealthy landowners,
and he destroys their fortified cities.

10

You hate those who challenge anyone who tries to make unjust decisions;
you hate those who tell the truth in your courts.

¹¹Doom is coming on you wealthy landowners and nobles because you oppress poor people and force them to pay hefty taxes.

You have built big stone mansions for yourselves,
but you will not be able to live in them.
You have planted delightful vineyards,
but there will not be any grapes for you to harvest to make wine.

¹²For I know all of your sins
and the terrible crimes that you have committed.

You oppress righteous people,
and you accept bribes.

You do not allow judges to treat poor people justly.

¹³This is a time when many people do evil things,
so people who have good sense say nothing at all.

¹⁴In order to remain alive,
you must stop doing what is wrong, and start doing what is right.
If you do that, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will be with you
as you claim that he always is.

¹⁵Love what is good, and hate what is evil!
Try to cause judges in your courts to make decisions that are right!
If you do those things, perhaps Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,
will act mercifully toward you descendants of Joseph who are still alive.

¹⁶Therefore, Yahweh will punish you for your sins! This is what Yahweh, the Lord, the commander of angel armies,
has solemnly declared:

"People will be wailing loudly in every street,
and people will cry in horror in every plaza at the complete desolation.
Farmers will leave their fields to come and weep,
along with the other official mourners who will wail for those who have died.

¹⁷People will be wailing in your vineyards,
because I will punish you severely," declares Yahweh.

¹⁸Terrible things will happen to you who want Yahweh to punish his enemies,
because that will be a day of darkness, not of light.

¹⁹At that time, when you try to run from a lion,
you will face a bear.

When you run into your house to be safe,
and you put your hand on the wall,
a snake will bite it.

²⁰That day, when he punishes people, will certainly be awful, like a dark night
without even a little bit of light.

²¹Yahweh says, "I hate your religious celebrations
and the times when you gather to worship me;

I detest them all.

²²Even if you bring me offerings to burn on the altar and offerings of grain,
I will no longer accept them.

Even if you bring me offerings to restore fellowship with me,
I will not pay any attention to them.

²³So stop singing noisy songs!
I will not listen when you play harps.

²⁴Instead, act justly and righteously; you should do this and never stop;
if you do, it will be like the water in a river that never stops flowing.

²⁵You Israelite people, your ancestors wandered through the wilderness for forty years;
and during that time, they never brought any sacrifices and offerings to me!

²⁶But you carried the two idols that you have made for yourselves—
Sikkuth, the god whom you call 'king,'
and Kaiwan, the image of the star that you worship.

²⁷For I will now force you to go to a country that is far beyond Damascus!" Yahweh has declared this; He is the
commander of angel armies.

Chapter 6

¹Terrible things will happen to you people in Jerusalem who are not worried about anything,
and also to you leaders who live on the hill of the city of Samaria, you who think that you are safe.
You call yourselves the most important people in the world,
and you are the leaders to whom Israelites go for help.

²You tell them, "Just go to the city of Kalneh and look at it.
Then go to see the great city Hamath
and to Gath in Philistia and look at it. They are all prosperous.

Now your lands are better than those places, and your two countries—Judah and Samaria—are bigger. So you are
safe."

³Terrible things will happen to you leaders! You are trying to avoid thinking about the coming time when you will
experience disasters,
when your enemies will violently attack you.

⁴You recline on couches decorated with expensive ivory
and lounge on padded beds.

You eat the tender meat of lambs
and fat calves.

⁵You create new songs as if you had nothing better to do,
and you play them on your harps like King David did.

⁶You drink entire bowlfuls of wine,
and you put expensive oils on your bodies,
but you do not grieve about our country of Israel.

⁷Therefore judgment is coming, and coming soon. Your feasting and lounging on soft couches will end,
and you will be among the first ones to be forced by your enemies to go into exile.

⁸Yahweh the Lord, the commander of angel armies has solemnly declared that this will happen:

"I hate the people of Israel because they are very proud;

I detest their fortresses.

I will enable their enemies to capture their capital city

and everything in it."

⁹When that happens, if there are ten people in one house, they will all die. ¹⁰If a relative who has the task of burning their corpses comes to the house and inquires of anyone who is still hiding there, "Is there anyone here with you?" and that person replies "No," the one who inquired will say, "Be quiet! You must not call Yahweh's attention to us by mentioning his name, or he may have a reason to kill us!"

¹¹Terrible things like that will happen because Yahweh has commanded that the large houses in Israel must be smashed into pieces,

and small houses must be smashed into tiny bits.

¹²Horses certainly do not run on big rocks,

and certainly people cannot plow the rocks with oxen.

But you have distorted what is fair;

you have changed what is right, crippling and impoverishing the very ones the laws were meant to protect

¹³You are proud because you have captured the town of Lo Debar,

and you have said, "We certainly took the town of Karnaim by our own power!"

¹⁴Therefore, Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, has declared this:

"Behold, I will cause a certain nation to attack you people of Israel;

they will oppress you all the way from Hamath Pass in the northwest

to the brook of the Arabah.

Chapter 7

¹This is what the Lord Yahweh showed me in a vision: "Behold, he is going to send locusts to destroy our crops. It is going to happen right after the king's share of the hay has been harvested and before the rest of the hay is ready to be harvested. ²In the vision I saw those locusts come, and they ate everything that was green. Then I cried out, "Yahweh our Lord, please forgive us! We Israelite people are very helpless; how will we be able to survive?"

³So Yahweh showed mercy and said, "That will not happen."

⁴Then this is what Yahweh our Lord showed me in another vision: Behold, Yahweh our Lord was calling to a fire to come and punish his people. In the vision I saw that the fire had dried up the water under all the land and also had burned everything on the land. ⁵Then I cried out again, "Yahweh our Lord, I plead with you, please stop this! We Israelite people are very helpless; how will we be able to survive?"

⁶So Yahweh showed mercy again, and Yahweh the Lord said, "That also will not happen."

⁷Then he showed me another vision. Behold, I saw the Lord standing beside a wall. It was very straight because it had been built using a plumb line. The Lord had the plumb line in his hand. ⁸Yahweh asked me, "Amos, what do you see?"

I replied, "A plumb line."

Then the Lord said, "Look, I am going to use a plumb line among my people, Israel, to show that they are crooked. I will not spare them from punishment any longer.

⁹Then I will destroy the hilltop places where the descendants of Isaac worship idols.

And I will also lay waste to the other important holy places in Israel.

And I will raise up against King Jeroboam and all his descendants the swords of his enemies.

¹⁰Then Amaziah the priest at Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, the king of Israel. In the message he said, "Amos is plotting against you among the Israelite people. I am worried that the people of this country will not know that he is wrong. ¹¹This is what Amos is saying:

'Jeroboam will soon die, murdered by an enemy wielding a sword.

and the enemies of Israel will forcibly remove the people of Israel and send them away from their land.'"

¹²Then Amaziah came to Amos and said, "You prophet, get out of here! Flee for your life back to the country of Judah! Do your prophesying there if you want to earn money! ¹³Do not prophesy anymore here at Bethel, because this is where the national temple, the king's temple, is!"

¹⁴Amos replied to Amaziah, "I was previously not a prophet and my father was not a prophet; I was a shepherd. I also took care of sycamore fig trees. ¹⁵But Yahweh took me away from taking care of my sheep, and Yahweh said to me, 'Go to Israel and prophesy to my people there!'

¹⁶So now, listen to Yahweh's judgment. "You said to me, 'Do not prophesy and say that terrible things will happen to the people of Israel;

stop saying those things!"

¹⁷Therefore, this is what Yahweh has declared about you:

'Your wife will become a prostitute in this very city;

your sons and daughters will die because their enemies will kill them.

Others will measure your land
and divide it up among themselves;
and you yourself will die in a foreign country.
And the people of Israel will certainly have to leave their country and go into exile.”

Chapter 8

¹This is what Yahweh our Lord showed me in a vision: Look, a basket full of ripe fruit. ²Yahweh asked me, “Amos, what do you see?”

I replied, “A basket full of ripe fruit.”

He said, “That indicates that it is almost the end for my Israelite people. I will not spare them from punishment any longer.

³Soon the people will be wailing instead of singing in the temple. There will be corpses everywhere, and people will say nothing as they remove them.” Yahweh the Lord has declared this will happen.

⁴Listen to your covenant crimes, rich rulers! When you cheat the poor, it is as though you people are trampling on the needy people,

and you destroy the poor people.

⁵You habitually say,

“We wish that the new moon festival would end soon,

in order that we may sell our grain.

We wish that the Sabbath would end soon,

in order that we may sell our wheat.—

When we sell it,

we can charge a big price for it,

and we can cheat people by using scales that do not weigh correctly.

⁶We will sell wheat that is no good.

Those who are needy and poor and who do not have money to buy things,

we will make them our slaves

by buying them with the little amount of silver with which we could buy a pair of sandals!”

⁷Yahweh has declared, “I am the God you should worship. Surely I will never forget the evil things that you have done.

⁸Because of those evil things, your country will certainly soon tremble,

and everyone who lives there will mourn.

It will repeatedly rise and fall

like the Nile River whose floodwaters overflow its banks
and then recede.

⁹Yahweh the Lord has declared this will happen: "The time is coming soon when I will bring judgment.
I will cause the sun to set at noontime,
and the entire earth will be dark in the daytime.

¹⁰I will cause your religious celebrations to become times when you mourn;
instead of singing, everyone will be weeping.
Because of what I will do, all of you will wear rough sackcloth and shave your heads
to show that you are sorrowing.
I will cause that time to be like when people mourn after an only son has died.
All of you will be very sad all of that time."

¹¹Yahweh the Lord declares this:
"Behold, It will soon be the time when I will cause something to be very scarce throughout the country.
But it will not be a time when there is no food or water;
it will instead be a time when there will be no messages from me for anyone to hear.

¹²People will stagger from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea,
and wander from the north to the east,
searching for a message from me,
but there will not be any.

¹³At that time,
even beautiful young women and strong young men will faint
because they will be very thirsty.

¹⁴Those who make oaths using the name of their shameful god of Samaria,
and those who solemnly promise to do something using the name of the god of Dan,
and those who swear using the name of the god of Beersheba—
they will all die;
they will never get up again."

Chapter 9

¹The Lord appeared to me in another vision. I saw him standing next to the altar. He said,
"Strike the temple pillars until they fall down,

so that the building collapses and the foundation shakes.

Shatter them so that the pieces crush all the people who are inside.

Anyone who lives I will kill with the sword;

No one will succeed in running away; no one will escape.

²If, in trying to escape, they dig deep pits in the ground, even all the way to the place of the dead, I will grab them from there.

Or, if they try to climb up to the sky, from there

I will seize them.

³If they go to the top of Mount Carmel to escape,

I will search for them and seize them.

If they try to hide from me at the bottom of the sea,

I will command the huge sea monster to devour them there.

⁴If their enemies capture them and force them to go to other countries,

I will command that they be killed there with swords.

I am determined to destroy them, not to help them."

⁵When Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, touches the earth, it melts,

and all over the earth many people die, and the others mourn for them.

It is as though Yahweh causes the earth repeatedly to rise and fall

like water in the Nile River rises and falls.

⁶He builds his beautiful palace in heaven

and sets the sky to be like a dome over the earth.

He scoops up the water from the ocean and puts it into clouds,

and then empties the clouds onto the earth.

His name is Yahweh.

⁷Yahweh has declared, "You people of Israel,

you are certainly now no more important to me than the people of Ethiopia.

I brought your ancestors here from Egypt,

but I also brought the people of Philistia from the Island of Crete,

and I brought the people of Aram from the region of Kir.

⁸Take note! I, Yahweh the Lord, have seen just how sinful you wealthy landowners and nobles are in the kingdom of Israel,

so I will destroy you and your kingdom.

However, I will not completely destroy all the descendants of Jacob."

Yahweh has declared that this will certainly happen.

⁹Take note! Because you treated your fellow person unjustly, I will send my judgment. I will punish the people of Israel for their sins, along with the other nations. My judgment will be thorough; not one wicked person will survive. ¹⁰From among my people,

all you sinful people who say, 'We will not experience disasters; nothing evil will happen to us,'

your enemies will kill you with their swords."

¹¹"The kingdom over which King David ruled has been destroyed, like a house that collapsed and then became ruins.

But some day I will cause it to be a kingdom again.

I will cause it to prosper again

just like it did previously.

¹²The result will be that your kingdom will include the remaining part of the region of Edom,

and your kingdom will include anyone among the other nations who worships me.

I, Yahweh, have declared that I will do these things,

and I will certainly cause them to happen.

¹³Yahweh has declared this: "Hear this! The time is coming when the harvest will be so plentiful! The reaper will still be harvesting crops when the plowman comes to till the field the following season. And, the grape-treaders will still be juicing the grapes when the planter comes the following season. The peace and prosperity will be so abundant that new wine will overflow and spill out of the wine presses onto the hillsides and run down every slope.

¹⁴I will cause you, my Israelite people, to prosper again.

You will rebuild your towns which your enemies destroyed, and you will live there.

You will plant vineyards and drink wine made from the grapes that grow in them. You will plant gardens and eat produce which grows in them.

¹⁵I will enable you to live in your land again,

the land that I gave to your ancestors;

never again will your enemies force you to leave it.

This will surely happen because I, Yahweh your covenant-keeping God, have declared it."

Obadiah

Chapter 1

¹This is a message that Yahweh our God gave to {me,} Obadiah, about the people of Edom. Yahweh our God has said this to us:

"I have sent a messenger to other nations,
telling them to prepare to go and attack Edom." ²{Now Yahweh says this to the people of Edom:}

"Listen to me—I will soon cause you to become the weakest
and most despised nation {on the earth}.

³Your capital city is high in the rocky cliffs,
and you are very proud.
You think that you are safe there—that no army can conquer you.
But you have deceived yourselves.

⁴Even if you could live where eagles live or even higher than that, among the stars,
you would still not be safe there from the attackers that I am sending to you. I, Yahweh, declare this {to you}.

⁵When thieves break into someone's house during the night and rob them,
they certainly steal only the things that they want.
And people who pick grapes always leave a few grapes on the vines.
But{, unlike them,} attackers will destroy your country completely!

⁶Descendants of Esau, these attackers will completely take away everything that you own.
They will even find {and take away} the valuable things that you have hidden.

⁷All your allies will turn against you, and they will force you to leave your country.
Those with whom you have peace now will trick you and defeat you.
Those who eat meals with you now are planning to trap you.
You people of Edom do not understand any of this.

⁸I, Yahweh, declare that at that time,
I will certainly destroy {even} Edom's {famous} wise men. No one living in those cliffs will know what to do any more.

⁹The soldiers in the army of Edom will become terrified.
Then when your army stops fighting, the attackers will completely destroy all you people who live in the land of Edom."

10"{All of this will happen because} you acted cruelly to your relatives who are descendants of Jacob{, the twin brother of your ancestor Esau}.

So now everyone will be ashamed of you, and the attackers will destroy you forever.

11At the time when strangers carried away the Israelite's wealth, you did nothing to help them.

Foreigners conquered all the cities of Judah, and they even took whatever they wanted from Jerusalem.

And you were just as bad as those foreigners{, because you did nothing to help}.

12You should not have gloated about the disaster that the Israelites were experiencing.

You should not have been happy when their towns were ruined.

You should not have made fun of them when they were suffering.

13They are my people, so you should not have entered their city gates when they were experiencing this terrible disaster.

Yes, you! You should not have enjoyed watching them suffer.

You women should not have taken away their valuable possessions.

14You should not have stood at the crossroads to kill some of the Israelites who were trying to escape.

You should not have captured others of them who had survived {and turned them over to their enemies} when they were experiencing those disasters."

15"{You should have helped the Israelites,} because the time is coming soon when I, Yahweh, will judge and punish all the nations.

I will do the same things to you {people of Edom} that you did to others.

The same {evil} things that you did to others will happen to you.

16{The people of Edom should not have done these evil things to you, people of Israel,} because in the way that you suffered in Jerusalem, the hill where my holy temple is,

in that same way I will continue to punish all the other nations.

I will punish them severely and make them disappear completely.

17But some people in Jerusalem will survive,

and Jerusalem will become a holy place.

Then the Israelites will once again occupy the land that belongs to them.

18The people of Israel will be like a fire, and the people of Edom will be like dry grass.

They will destroy the people of Edom, just as fire completely burns up dry grass.

None of the descendants of Edom will survive.

This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it will happen."

19The Israelites who live in the southern wilderness of Judea will capture the land of Edom.

The Israelites who live in the western foothills will capture the region of Phoenicia.

The Israelites will also capture the areas that belonged to {the tribe of} Ephraim and that surrounded {the city of} Samaria {to the north}.

The people of the tribe of Benjamin will capture the region east of the Jordan River.

²⁰A great number of the people from {the kingdom of} Israel were captured and taken away from their homes. They lived in the land of Canaan. {But they will return, and} they will capture and occupy that land as far {north} as Zarephath.

Many of the people were captured and taken away from Jerusalem. They now live in Sepharad. They will {return and} occupy the cities in the southern wilderness of Judea.

²¹{After}Israel's military leaders {conquer the land of Edom, they} will {then} rule over Edom from high up in Jerusalem.

And Yahweh will be their king.

Jonah

Chapter 1

¹There was a man named Jonah, the son of Amittai. It happened {one day} that Yahweh spoke to him. This is what Yahweh said: ²"I have seen that the people of Nineveh are continually doing things that are very evil. Therefore, get moving. Go to Nineveh, that huge capital city {of Assyria}, and proclaim to the people there that I am planning to punish them for their evil actions." ³So Jonah went, {but in the opposite direction,} towards the {far-away} city of Tarshish, thinking that he could get away from Yahweh there. He went down to {the port at} the city of Joppa and found a ship that was about to go to Tarshish. The captain of the ship asked him for money, and he gave it to him. Then he went down into the ship in order to go with the crew of the ship to Tarshish, in order to get away from Yahweh.

⁴But Yahweh caused a strong wind to blow over the sea, and such an enormous storm happened that the waves were about to break the ship apart. ⁵The sailors were frightened and each one prayed loudly to the god that he worshiped {for that god to save them from the storm}. They even threw the cargo from the ship into the sea in order to make the ship lighter, so that it would not so easily {take on water and} sink. While all of this was going on, Jonah was down inside the ship, lying down and sleeping soundly!

⁶Then the captain of the crew went down to where Jonah was {sleeping}. He {wakened Jonah and} said to him, "Something must be wrong with you, to sleep during a storm like this! Get up! Pray earnestly to the god that you worship! Perhaps that god will think about us and save us."

⁷After a while one of the sailors said to the others, "We need to cast lots, to determine who has caused this terrible thing to happen to us!" They all agreed, so they cast lots, and the lot indicated Jonah.

⁸So the sailors said these things to Jonah: "You must tell us who has caused this terrible thing to happen to us. What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What country are you from? What group of people do you belong to?"

⁹Jonah answered them, "I am a Hebrew. I worship Yahweh, the {One True} God who lives in heaven. He is the one who made both the sea and the land." ¹⁰Jonah also told the sailors that he was trying to get away from Yahweh {in order to avoid doing something that Yahweh had told him to do}. So now{, when they learned that Yahweh was the one controlling the sea,} they were terrified.

One of the sailors said to Jonah, "You have done a terrible thing! {Now we are all about to die because of you!}"

¹¹The storm continued to become worse, and the waves continued to become bigger. So one of the sailors asked Jonah, "What should we do to you so that the sea might calm down and stop threatening us?"

¹²Jonah told them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. If you do that, the sea will calm down and stop threatening you. This will work because I am certain that this terrible storm happened to you because I did not do what Yahweh told me to do."

¹³But the sailors {did not want to do that. Instead, they} tried hard to row the ship back to the land. But they could not do it because the waves became even bigger and stronger against them. ¹⁴Finally, all of the sailors prayed to Yahweh, "O Yahweh, you are the one controlling all of these things {that have happened to us, including this storm and the lot that we cast}. Therefore we beg you, Yahweh, please do not let us die because of this man. No, do not kill us for killing someone who has done nothing against us." ¹⁵Then they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea. Immediately, the sea became calm. ¹⁶When that happened, the sailors became greatly awed {at how powerful Yahweh was}. They offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and solemnly promised to worship him.

¹⁷Meanwhile, Yahweh caused a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Chapter 2

¹While he was inside the fish, Jonah prayed to Yahweh, the God whom he worshiped. ²This is what he said:

“When I was deeply distressed, I prayed to Yahweh {to rescue me}, and he did.

Even though I was in the belly {of a fish} where I thought I would die, yet {even there} you heard my voice and listened to me {when I begged for you to help me}.

³You had thrown me into the deep water, into the middle of the sea where the currents swirled around me.

All of those terrible waves that you made passed above me.

⁴But as for me, I thought, ‘You have thrown me away; you do not care even to look at me; even so I may still see your holy temple again.’

⁵Water was all around me, close to ending my life; {yes,} deep water surrounded me; seaweed became wrapped around my head.

⁶I went down as far as the place where the mountains start rising from the bottom of the sea; I felt as though the earth was a prison with no possible way for me to escape.

But you, Yahweh God, whom I worship, rescued me from going down to the place of the dead.

⁷When I was almost dead, I thought about you, Yahweh{, to ask you for help}.

And from your holy place where you live, you accepted my prayer.

⁸Those who worship worthless idols reject you, the one who would always be faithful to them.

⁹But I {will not do that. Rather}, I will give a sacrifice to you as I loudly thank you.

I will do what I have solemnly promised {you} that I would do.

Yahweh, you are the only One True God who saves people.”

¹⁰Then Yahweh commanded the {huge} fish {to spew out Jonah}, and the fish spewed out Jonah onto the land.

Chapter 3

¹Then Yahweh spoke to Jonah again. This is what Yahweh said: ²“Get moving! Go to Nineveh, the large capital city {of Assyria}, and preach to the people who live there the message that I tell you to preach to them.” ³This time, Jonah got moving and went to Nineveh, just as Yahweh had told him to do.

Now Nineveh was an extremely large city. It was so large that a person had to walk for three days {to go completely through it}. ⁴When Jonah arrived, he began walking through the city for about one day. Then he proclaimed to the people in the city, "Forty days from now, God will destroy Nineveh!"

⁵The people of Nineveh believed the message from God {that Jonah proclaimed}. They decided that everyone should fast and wear coarse cloth on their bodies {in order to show that they were sorry for the evil things that they had been doing}. So everyone in the city did that, from the most important people to the least important people. ⁶When the king of Nineveh heard about the message {that Jonah was preaching}, he got up from his throne. He took off his royal robes, put on coarse cloth instead, and sat down on a heap of cold ashes. {He did all this to show that he also was sorry for the evil actions that he had been doing.}

⁷Then he sent messengers to proclaim to the people in Nineveh: "The king and his officials have decreed that no person or animal may taste any food nor drink any water. Even the cows and the sheep may not graze. ⁸Every person and every {domestic} animal must wear coarse cloth on their bodies. Everyone must pray fervently to God. Also, everyone must stop doing the evil things that they have been doing and the violent things that they have been doing {to other people}. ⁹If everyone does those things, it is possible that this god will change his mind and be merciful to us. He may relent from being so angry with us, with the result that we will live."

¹⁰So the people did those things and stopped doing the evil actions that they had been doing. God saw all of this. So God had mercy on them and did not destroy them as he had said he would do. {Even though he had said that,} he did not do it.

Chapter 4

¹For Jonah, it was wrong, terribly wrong{, that God did not destroy Nineveh}. He became very angry about it. ²He prayed to Yahweh, "See! Yahweh, This is exactly what I said would happen even before I left home! I knew that you are a God who acts very kindly and compassionately {toward all people}. You do not quickly become angry {with people who act in evil ways}. You love people very much, and you prefer to be merciful to people rather than to punish them. Therefore, I ran away to go to Tarshish in order to stop this very thing from happening. ³So now, Yahweh, please kill me, because I would rather die than continue to live {if you do not destroy Nineveh}."

⁴Yahweh replied, "It is wrong for you to be angry {that I did not destroy Nineveh}."

⁵Then Jonah left the city {of Nineveh} and sat down {a short distance away} on the east side of the city. There he made a small shelter to shade himself {from the sun}. He stayed under the shelter and waited to see what would happen to the city.

⁶Then Yahweh God caused a plant to grow up {very quickly} above Jonah to shade his head {from the sun}. Yahweh did that in order to remove the bad things that Jonah was experiencing. Jonah was very happy to have this plant {that shaded him from the sun}. ⁷Then, at dawn the next day, God caused a worm to chew the plant so much that the plant withered away. ⁸Then, shortly after the sun had risen, God caused a hot wind to blow from the east. The sun shone very hotly on Jonah's head, and Jonah began to feel faint. He wanted to die and he exclaimed, "It would be better for me to die than to continue living!"

⁹Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about what happened to the plant?"

Jonah replied, "Yes, it is right for me to be angry! I am so angry that I want to die!"

¹⁰Then Yahweh said to him, "As for you, you felt very sad about the plant when it died, even though you did not work to take care of it, nor did you do anything to make it grow. It grew up in one night, and it completely withered by the end of the next night. ¹¹In the same way, but very much more, it is right for me to feel sad about

{destroying} the huge city of Nineveh. There are more than 120, 000 people living there who do not know right from wrong. There are also many animals. {I created all of them, so} it is right for me to be concerned about them."

Micah

Chapter 1

¹Yahweh gave Micah, who was from Moresheth in Judah, these messages in visions about Samaria and Jerusalem during the time when Jotham, and then Ahaz, and then Hezekiah were the kings of Judah.

²You people everywhere on the earth, pay attention to this.

Yahweh our God is accusing you from his holy temple in heaven.

³He will come down from heaven

and walk over the high places where you worship idols.

⁴It will be as though the mountains will melt under his feet

as wax melts in front of a fire,

and as water disappears

when it rushes down into a valley.

⁵Those things will happen because of the terrible sins that the people of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, have committed.

But it was the people of the city of Samaria who persuaded all the people of Israel to sin.

And it was because the people of Jerusalem set up altars to worship their gods

that the other people of Judah thought they should also worship idols on the hilltops.

⁶Yahweh says this: "I will cause Samaria to become a heap of rubble;

it will be only a field for planting vineyards.

I will cause the stones of its buildings to roll down into the valley.

I will destroy the buildings down to their foundations.

⁷I will make others smash the idols in Samaria to pieces.

The gifts given to prostitutes at the temples of their idols will be burned in fire.

Because people paid prostitutes there,

their enemies will take away those idols and sell them to pay prostitutes in other countries.

⁸Because Samaria will be destroyed, I will weep and wail.

I will walk around barefoot and naked.

I will howl like a jackal

and screech like an owl.

⁹I will lament because Samaria will be completely destroyed;

nothing can save that city.

But the same thing will happen to Judah.

It is as though the enemy army had already reached the city gates of Jerusalem,
the main city where my people live.

¹⁰Do not tell that to our enemies in the city of Gath in Philistia!

Do not cry, or the people there will find out what is happening.

Instead, just roll on the ground in Beth Leaphrah.

¹¹You people who live in Shaphir,

naked and ashamed, you will be taken to another country.

You people in Beth Ezel should mourn,

because no one from Zaanan will go out to help you.

¹²The people of Maroth

are anxiously waiting for good things to happen to them.

But I will make terrible things to happen to them,

and they will soon happen at the gates of Jerusalem."

¹³You people in the city of Lachish,

hitch your horses to pull the chariots in which you can ride to flee from your enemies.

The Israelite people rebelled against Yahweh,

and you imitated them,

and that caused the people of Jerusalem to start sinning, too.

¹⁴You people of Judah, send a farewell gift to the people of Moresheth,

because their enemies will soon destroy it.

The kings of Israel will soon find out that the people of the town of Akzib will disappoint them.

¹⁵You people of Mareshah,

Yahweh will soon send someone to conquer your town.

It will be necessary for the great leaders of Israel to go and hide in the cave near Adullam.

¹⁶You people of Judah, shave your heads and go into mourning,

because the children whom you love will soon go into exile.

Chapter 2

¹Terrible things will happen to you who lie awake at night,

planning to do wicked things.

Then you get up at dawn, and you do those things
as soon as you are able to do them.

²You want fields that belong to other people,
so you seize them;
you also take their houses.

You cheat people to get their homes,
taking away the property that belongs to their families.

³Therefore, this is what Yahweh says:

"I will cause you people of Israel to experience disasters,
and you will not be able to escape from them.
You will no longer walk around proudly,
because when that happens, it will be a time of much trouble for you.

⁴At that time, your enemies will make fun of you rich people;
they will ridicule you by singing this sad song about you:
'We Israelites are completely ruined;
Yahweh is taking our land from us,
and he will give it to those who capture us.'"

⁵So when it is the time for the land to be given back to you people who belong to Yahweh,
there will be no one alive among you rich families to receive back any of that land.

⁶The people who heard me say that replied to me,
"Do not prophesy such things!
Do not say that Yahweh is going to humiliate us by causing us to experience disasters!"

⁷But you people talk like that!
You say that Yahweh never gets angry,
and that he never really punishes us."
Of course, what I say certainly helps those who live in the right way.

⁸But Yahweh says,
"Recently my people have been acting toward me like an enemy.
You rich people refuse to return the coats of those who have borrowed money from you,
the coats they gave you to promise that they would repay their debts.

You take their coats without warning, surprising them as much as soldiers returning from war would be surprised by attacks instead of safety at home.

⁹You have forced women to leave their nice homes,
and you have stolen from their children forever the blessings that I wanted to give them.

¹⁰So get up and leave here!
This is not a place where you can rest and be safe,
because you have defiled it.

I will make sure it will be completely destroyed.

¹¹You people want a prophet who will lie to you,
saying, 'I will preach that you should drink plenty of wine and other alcoholic drinks!'
That is the kind of prophet who would please you."

¹²"But some day, you descendants of Jacob, I will bring back from exile the Israelite people who have survived.
I will gather you together
like a shepherd gathers his sheep into a pen,
and there will be many of you in your land.

¹³Your leader will enable them to leave the countries where they have been exiled;
he will lead them out of the gates of their enemies' cities,
back to your own country.
Your king will lead them;
it is I, Yahweh, who will be their king!"

Chapter 3

¹Then I said, "You Israelite leaders, listen to what I say!
You should certainly know what things are right to do
and what things are wrong,

²but you hate what is good
and love what is evil.

You act like butchers:
it is as though you strip the skin off my people
and tear the flesh from their bones.

³It is as though you chop them into pieces like meat to be cooked in a pot.

⁴Then, when you have troubles, you plead to Yahweh to help you,

but he will not answer you.

At that time, he will turn his face away from you
because of the evil things that you have done."

⁵This is what Yahweh says

about your false prophets who are deceiving the people:

"If someone gives them food,
those prophets say that things will go well for him.

But they declare that I will punish anyone who does not give them food.

⁶So now it is as though night will descend on you prophets;

you will not receive any more visions.

It is as though the sun will set for you;
the time when you are greatly honored will end.

⁷Then you seers will be disgraced;

you will cover your faces because you will be ashamed,
because when you ask me what will happen, there will be no answer from me."

⁸But as for me, I am full of God's power,

power from the Spirit of Yahweh.

I am just and strong

and declare to the Israelite people
that they have sinned and rebelled against Yahweh.

⁹You leaders of the people of Israel, listen to this:

You hate it when people do what is just,
and when people say what is true,
you say it is false.

¹⁰It is as though you are building houses in Jerusalem on foundations
that consist of murdering people and doing what is corrupt.

¹¹Your leaders make favorable decisions only if they receive bribes.

Your priests teach people only if those people pay them well.

Your false prophets require people to pay them to tell people what will happen to them in the future.

Those prophets say, "Yahweh is telling us what we should say,
and we say that we will not experience any disasters."

¹²Because of what you leaders do,
Mount Zion will be plowed like a field;
it will become a heap of ruins.
The top of the hill, where the temple is now, will be covered with trees.

Chapter 4

¹Yahweh says that some day his temple will be on top of a mountain,
and that mountain will be the most important one on the earth;
it will be as though it was higher than all the hills,
and huge groups of people from all over the world will come there to worship.

²People from many nations will say to each other,
“Let us go to the mountain where Yahweh is,
to the temple where we can worship the God whom Jacob worshiped.
There he will teach us how he wants us to conduct our lives,
and we will do what he wants us to do.”
Mount Zion is the place where he will teach people;
and people will go out from Jerusalem to tell others his messages.

³Yahweh will settle disputes between many different people and groups who are fighting against each other,
and he will also settle disputes between powerful nations that are far away.
Then people will hammer their swords to cause them to become plow blades,
and hammer their spears to cause them to become pruning knives.
Armies of nations will no longer fight against armies of other nations,
and they will no longer train men how to fight in wars.

⁴Everyone will sit peacefully under his own grapevines,
and under his own fig trees;
no one will cause them to be afraid.
That is what will surely happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has said it.

⁵Many of the people of other nations will worship their own gods,
but we will worship Yahweh our God always, forever.

⁶Yahweh says, “There will soon be a time when I will gather the people whom I have punished,
who have been exiled,

all those whom I have caused to suffer much.

⁷My people who did not die while they were exiled will become a strong nation again.

Then I, Yahweh, will be their king,

and I will rule from Jerusalem forever.

⁸As for you people of Jerusalem,

you who guard all of my people as a shepherd guards his sheep from a tower,

you who live on Mount Zion will have great power again.

You people who live in Jerusalem will again rule as you did previously.

⁹So why are you wailing now?

Is it because you have no king?

Have all your wise people died?

You are weeping loudly like a woman who is giving birth to a baby.

¹⁰Well, you people of Jerusalem should twist and groan as a woman who is having birth pains,

because now you must leave this city.

While you are traveling, you will set up tents in open fields at night;

you will go to live in Babylon.

But while you are there,

I, Yahweh, will rescue you;

I will free you from the power of your enemies.

¹¹Now the armies of many nations have gathered to attack you.

They are saying, 'Jerusalem must be destroyed!

We want to see this city when it becomes ruins!'"

¹²The prophet says, they do not know what Yahweh thinks;

and they do not understand what he is planning.

He will gather them and punish them

as farmers thresh grain on the ground.

¹³Yahweh says, "So, you people of Jerusalem, rise up and punish the nations who oppose you.

I will cause you to be very strong,

as if you had horns made of iron,

as if you had hooves made of bronze;

and you will crush many nations.

Then you will take from your enemies the valuable things that they have taken from other countries,
and I will cause you to dedicate those things to me, the one who is the Lord of all the people on the earth.”

Chapter 5

¹You people of Jerusalem, gather your troops together.

Even though you have a wall around your city to protect it,
enemy soldiers are surrounding the city.

Soon they will strike your leader on his face with a rod.

²But you people of Bethlehem in the district of Ephrathah,
even though your town is a very small one among all the towns in Judah,
someone who will rule Israel will be born in your town.

He will be someone whose family existed a very long time ago.

³Now God will allow your enemies to conquer you, you people of Israel,
but it will be for only a short time,
like the short time that women have great pain while their babies are being born.
After that, your fellow countrymen who were exiled will return to their own country.

⁴And that a man who will rule there in Jerusalem will stand and lead his people well,
because Yahweh, his God, will cause him to be strong and greatly honored.
Then the people whom he rules will live in Jerusalem safely;
he will be greatly honored by people all over the earth
so no one will dare to attack Jerusalem.

⁵And he will cause things to go well with his people.
When the army of Assyria attacks our country
and breaks through our fortresses,
we will appoint seven or eight leaders to lead our army to fight against them.

⁶With their swords our army will defeat the army of Assyria, whose capital Nimrod founded long ago. Our army will
rule their cities.
So our army will rescue us from the Assyrian army
when they invade our country.

⁷The descendants of Jacob who survive will be a blessing to the people of other nations
like dew and rain sent by Yahweh do good to the grass.
They will not trust in humans to help them;

instead, they will rely on Yahweh.

⁸In the midst of their enemies in many people groups,
the descendants of Jacob who remain alive will be like a lion among the other wild beasts of the forest,
like a strong young lion that attacks sheep in a flock,
and no one will be able to rescue their enemies.

⁹You Israelites will defeat all your enemies
and completely destroy them.

¹⁰Yahweh says,
“At that time, I will destroy you Israelite people’s horses that your soldiers use in war,
together with your chariots.

¹¹I will tear down your city walls
and destroy all your fortified cities.

¹²I will get rid of all those among you who practice magic
and the fortune tellers.

¹³I will destroy all your idols and stone pillars,
and then you will no longer bow down and worship things that you yourselves have made.

¹⁴I will get rid of your poles that represent the goddess Asherah,
and I will also destroy all your idols.

¹⁵Because I will be very angry,
I will also punish the people of all the nations who have not obeyed me.”

Chapter 6

¹Pay attention to what Yahweh will say:
Micah says to Yahweh, “Stand up in court and accuse the Israelites.
Allow the hills and mountains to hear what you will say.

²The mountains must listen carefully to what Yahweh says about his people, so they can be witnesses.
Indeed, Yahweh has many things to accuse his people Israel about.

³He says this: “My people, what have I done to cause trouble for you?
What have I done to cause you to experience difficulties?
Answer me!

⁴I did great things for your ancestors;

I brought them out of Egypt;
I rescued them from that land where they were slaves.
I sent Moses to lead them,
and his older brother Aaron and his older sister Miriam.

⁵My people, think about when Balak, the king of Moab, requested Beor's son Balaam to curse your ancestors,
and think about what Balaam replied.

Think about how your ancestors crossed the Jordan River miraculously while they were traveling from Acacia to Gilgal.

Think about those things in order that you may know that I, Yahweh, do what is right."

⁶The Israelite people ask, "What shall we bring to Yahweh who lives in heaven
when we come to him and bow down before him?

Should we bring calves that are a year old
that will be offerings that will be killed and completely burned on the altar?

⁷Would Yahweh be pleased if we offered to him a thousand rams
and ten thousand streams of olive oil?

Should we offer our firstborn children to be sacrifices
to pay for the sins that we have committed?"

⁸No, because he has shown each of us what is good to do;
he has shown us what he requires each of us to do:
he wants us to do what is just and to love to act mercifully toward others,
and he wants us to live humbly while we fellowship with him, our God.

⁹God says this: "I am Yahweh, so if you are wise, you should honor me.

I am calling out to you people of Jerusalem to tell you this:

The armies that will destroy your city are coming,
so pay careful attention to me, the one who is causing them to punish you with my rod.

¹⁰You wicked people have filled your homes with valuable things
that you acquired by cheating others.

You use false measures when you buy and sell things.

Those are things that I hate.

¹¹You do not think that I should say nothing about people who use scales that do not weigh correctly,
and who use weights that are not accurate, do you?

¹²The rich people among you always act violently to get money from poor people.

All of the people in Jerusalem are liars,
and they always deceive people.

¹³Therefore, I have already begun to get rid of you,
to ruin you because of the sins that you have committed.

¹⁴Soon you will eat food, but you will not have enough to satisfy you;
your stomachs will still feel as though they are empty.

You will try to save up money,
but you will be able to save nothing,
because I will send your enemies to take it from you in wars.

¹⁵You will plant crops,
but you will not harvest anything.
You will press olives,
but others, not you, will use the olive oil.

You will trample on the grapes and make wine from the juice,
but others, not you, will drink the wine.

¹⁶Those things will happen to you because you obey only the wicked laws of King Omri,
and you do the terrible things that King Ahab and his descendants commanded.
So I will destroy your country,
and I will cause the other people groups to despise you, my own people."

Chapter 7

¹I am very miserable!
I am like someone who is hungry, who searches for fruit to eat
and who finds no grapes or figs to eat
because all the fruit has been picked.

²Everyone who honored God has disappeared from this land;
not one of them is left.

The people who are left are all murderers;
it is as though everyone is eager to kill his fellow countryman.

³They do what is evil with all their might.
Government officials and judges all ask for bribes.

Important people tell others what they want,
and they plot together about how to get it.

⁴Even the best people are as worthless as briars;
the people who we thought to be the most honest are worse than thornbushes.
But Yahweh will soon judge them.

Now is the time that he will punish people,
when they will be very confused because of it.

⁵So do not trust anyone!
Do not trust even a friend;
even be careful what you say to your wife, whom you love.

⁶Boys will despise their fathers,
and girls will defy their mothers.
Women will defy their mothers-in-law.
Your enemies will be those who live in your own house.

⁷As for me, I wait for Yahweh to help me.
I confidently expect that God, my Savior, will answer me when I pray.

⁸You who are our enemies,
do not gloat about what has happened to us,
because even if we have experienced disasters,
those disasters will end, and we will be prosperous again.
Even if it is as though we are sitting in the darkness,
Yahweh will be our light.

⁹We must be patient while Yahweh punishes us
because we have sinned against him.
But later, it will be as though he will go to court and defend us.
He will make sure that the judge makes a right decision about us.
It will be as though he will bring us out into the light,
and we will see him rescue us.

¹⁰Our enemies will also see it, and they will be disgraced
because they ridiculed us, saying
“Why is Yahweh, that God of yours, not helping you?”

But with our own eyes we will see them be defeated;
we will see them trampled
like mud in the streets.

¹¹You people of Israel, at that time your cities will be rebuilt,
and your territory will become larger.

¹²Your people will come back to you from many countries,
from Assyria, from near the Euphrates River in the east, and from Egypt in the south,
from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea,
and from many mountains.

¹³But the other countries on the earth will become desolate
because of the evil deeds that their people have done.

¹⁴Yahweh, protect your people as a shepherd protects his sheep with his staff.
Lead the people whom you have chosen to belong to you.
Even though some of them live by themselves in a forest,
give them the fertile pastureland
in the regions of Bashan and Gilead,
which they possessed long ago.

¹⁵Yahweh says,
"Yes, I will perform miracles for you
like the miracles that I performed when I rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt."

¹⁶People from many nations will see what Yahweh does for you,
and they will be ashamed
because they do not have any power.
They will put their hands over their mouths and their ears because they will be very amazed at what Yahweh does.
They will not be able to say anything or hear anything, because they will be terrified.

¹⁷Being very humiliated, they will crawl on the ground like snakes.
They will come out of their homes trembling
and stand to honor Yahweh our God.
They will be very afraid of him
and will tremble in front of him.

¹⁸Yahweh, there is no God like you;

you forgive the sins that the people who have survived committed,
the people who belong to you.

You do not remain angry forever;
you are very happy to show us that you faithfully love us.

19You will again act kindly toward us.

You will get rid of the scroll on which you have written the sins that we have committed,
as though you were trampling it under your feet
or throwing it into the deep ocean.

20You will show that you faithfully do what you promised for us and faithfully love us,
just as you solemnly promised long ago to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob that you would do.

Nahum

Chapter 1

¹I am Nahum, from the village of Elkosh. This is a message about the city of Nineveh, a message that Yahweh gave me in a vision.

²Yahweh our God tolerates no rival gods to himself.

He is very angry with those who worship other gods,
and he continues to be angry with his enemies.

³Yahweh does not quickly become angry;
but he is very powerful,
and he will never say that his enemies are innocent.
Wherever he walks, there are whirlwinds and storms,
and clouds are like the dust stirred up by his feet.

⁴When he commands oceans and rivers to become dry, they dry up.
He causes the grass to wither
in the fields in the region of Bashan and on the slopes of Mount Carmel,
and he causes the flowers in Lebanon to fade.

⁵When he appears, it is as though the mountains shake and the hills melt;
the earth quakes, and the people on the earth tremble.

⁶There is no one who can resist him when he becomes extremely angry;
there is no one who can survive when his anger is very hot.
When he is very angry, it is as though his anger is like a blazing fire,
and it is as though mountains are shattered into pieces.

⁷But he is good;
he protects us, his people, when we experience troubles.
He takes care of those who trust in him.

⁸But he will get rid of his enemies;
he will be to them like a flood that destroys everything.
He will chase his enemies
into the darkness of the place where the dead are.

⁹So it is useless for you people of Nineveh to plot against Yahweh.

He will not need to strike you two times to destroy you;

he will destroy you by striking you only once.

¹⁰It will be as though his enemies are tangled in thorns

and they will stagger like people who have drunk a lot of wine.

It will be as though they will be burned up like dry stubble.

¹¹In Nineveh there was a man who advised people to do very wicked things against Yahweh. ¹²But this is what Yahweh says to you Israelites:

"Although the people of Assyria have very many people

and their army is very powerful,

they will be destroyed and they will disappear.

I say to my people in Judah,

I have already punished you,

but I will not punish you again.

¹³Now I will cause the people of Assyria to no longer enslave you; it will be as though I will tear off the shackles on your hands and feet."

¹⁴And this is what Yahweh also declares about you people of Nineveh:

"You will not have any descendants who will continue to have your family names.

And I will destroy all the statues of your gods

that were carved or formed in molds.

I will cause you to be killed and sent to your graves, because you are vile!"

¹⁵You people of Judah. Look! A messenger will come across the mountains,

and he will bring good news to you.

He will declare that you will now have peace.

So celebrate your festivals, and do what you solemnly promised

to do when your enemies were threatening to attack you,

because your wicked enemies will not invade your country again,

because they will be completely destroyed.

Chapter 2

¹You people of Nineveh, your enemies are coming to attack you. So place guards on the tops of the walls around the city! Guard the roads into the city! Get ready to fight! Gather your troops together! ²Even though your soldiers have destroyed the descendants of Jacob, Yahweh will cause other nations to honor them again. Invaders from

your country have ruined Israel as enemies would uproot a vineyard, but Israel will prosper again. ³The shields of the enemy soldiers who are coming to attack you will shine red as the sun shines on them,

and they will wear bright red uniforms.

The metal of their chariot wheels will flash when they line up before the battle,

and their soldiers will lift up their cypress spear and wave them.

⁴Their chariots dash through the streets of Nineveh

and rush furiously through the plazas.

Going as quickly as lightning,

they look like flaming torches.

⁵An officer gives a command to his officials,

and they come to him so quickly that they stumble.

They run up the city wall to attack it,

and they set up a large wooden shield above the soldiers to protect them.

⁶The enemy soldiers will force open the city gates on the rivers;

the palace will collapse.

⁷The queen will have her clothes stripped off her by enemy soldiers,

and her slave girls will moan like doves

and beat their breasts to show that they are very sad. ⁸The people will rush from Nineveh

like water rushes from a broken dam.

The officials will shout, "Stop! Stop!"

but the people will not even look back as they run away.

⁹The enemy attackers say to each other,

"Seize the silver!

Grab the gold!

There is a huge amount of very valuable things in the city,

more valuable things than anyone can count!"

¹⁰Soon everything valuable in the city will be seized or ruined. People will be trembling, with the result that they will not be able to fight. Their faces will all become pale with fear.

¹¹After that happens, people will say,

"What happened to that great city of Nineveh?

It was like a den full of young lions,

where the male and female lions lived and fed the young ones, where they were afraid of nothing.

¹²The soldiers in Nineveh were like lions that killed or strangled other animals and brought the meat to their dens."

¹³Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh,

"I am your enemy;

I will cause your chariots to burn in fire and go up in smoke.

Your young men will be killed with swords.

I will make all the valuable things you stole from other nations disappear.

Your messengers will never again take messages to other nations, demanding that their armies surrender to them."

Chapter 3

¹Terrible things will happen to Nineveh, that city that is full of people who murder, steal and lie. The city is full of people who the soldiers carried away from other countries. ²But now listen to the enemy soldiers coming to attack Nineveh; listen to them cracking their whips, and listen to the rattle of their chariot wheels! Listen to their galloping horses and their chariots as they bounce along! ³Look at their flashing swords and glittering spears as the horsemen race forward! Many people of Nineveh will be killed; there will be piles of corpses, so many that the attackers will stumble over them. ⁴All that will happen because Nineveh is like a beautiful prostitute

who lures men to where they will be ruined;

Nineveh is a beautiful city

that has attracted people of other nations to come there.

The people of Nineveh taught those people of other nations rituals of magic, and caused them to become their slaves.

⁵So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh:

"I am your enemy, and I will cause the people

in other nations to see you completely humiliated;

like women who have committed adultery are humiliated

by having their skirts lifted high,

with the result that people can see their naked bodies.

⁶I will cause others to throw garbage at you;

I will show others that I despise you very much,

and I will cause everyone to ridicule you in public.

⁷All those who see you will turn their backs to you and say,

'Nineveh is ruined,

but absolutely no one will mourn for it.'

Nineveh, no one will want to comfort you."

⁸Your city is certainly no safer than the city of Thebes was.

Thebes was an important city beside the Nile River;
the river was like a wall around her.

⁹The rulers of Ethiopia and Egypt helped Thebes; there was no limit to their power.

The governments of the nearby countries of Put and Libya
were also allies of Thebes.

¹⁰Nevertheless, Thebes was captured,
and its people were exiled.

Their babies were dashed to pieces in the streets of the city.

Enemy soldiers cast lots to decide who would get
each official in Thebes to become his slave.

All the leaders of Thebes were fastened by chains.

¹¹You people of Nineveh will similarly become dazed and drunk,
and you will search for places to hide
to escape from your enemies.

¹²Your enemies will cause the walls around your city to fall down
like the first figs that fall right into your mouths when you shake the tree.
This is how easily your city will be captured.

¹³Look at your soldiers!

They will be like weak women!

The gates of your city will be opened wide
to allow your enemies to enter them,
and then the bars of those gates will be burned.

¹⁴Store up water now to use when your enemies surround the city!

Repair the forts!

Dig up clay and trample it to make it soft,
and put it into molds to make bricks to repair the walls!

¹⁵Nevertheless, your enemies will burn your city;
they will kill you with their swords;
they will kill you as locusts destroy crops.

Go ahead and increase your population like swarms of locusts and grasshoppers. ¹⁶In your city there are now very many merchants;

more than stars.

But when your city is being destroyed,
those merchants will take the valuable things and disappear
like locusts that strip the leaves from plants and then fly away.

¹⁷Your leaders are also like a swarm of locusts
that crowd together on the fences on a cold day,
and then fly away when the sun comes up,
and no one knows where they have gone.

¹⁸King of Assyria, your officials will all die;
your important people will lie down and rest forever.
Your people will be scattered over the mountains,
and there will be no one to gather them together. ¹⁹You are like someone who has a wound that cannot be healed;
it will be a wound that causes him to die.

And all those who hear about what has happened to you will clap their hands joyfully.
They will say, "Everyone has suffered because he continually acted very cruelly
toward us."

Habakkuk

Chapter 1

¹This is the conversation between Habakkuk the prophet and Yahweh.

²I said, "Yahweh, how long must I continue to call to you for help before you respond?

I cry out, "The people are acting so violently!"

but you do not rescue me!

³Why do you make me watch people do what is wrong, but you do nothing?

I see people destroying things and acting violently; they fight and quarrel everywhere.

⁴No one obeys the law of Moses, and no one acts in a right way for very long.

Wicked people always defeat the righteous people in the courts,

because judges never make fair decisions."

⁵Yahweh replied to me,

"This is happening, but look around at what is happening in the other nations.

If you look, you will be amazed, and even astonished, since I am doing something

during this time that you would never have believed would happen,

even if someone told you about it.

⁶Very soon I will bring the soldiers of Babylonia, who are fierce and swift.

They will march across the entire earth

and conquer many other countries.

⁷They are a people whom others fear very much,

and they do whatever they want to,

because they believe that they are very great and that they have the right to judge everyone else.

⁸The horses that pull their chariots go faster than leopards,

and they are fiercer than wolves are in the evening.

The horses on which the soldiers ride gallop swiftly;

the soldiers riding them come from distant places.

They are like eagles that swoop down to snatch their prey.

⁹As they ride along,

they are determined to act violently.

They advance eagerly, as fast as the wind over the desert,
and gather up as many prisoners as there are grains of sand!

¹⁰They make fun of kings and princes of other countries,
and they ridicule all the cities that have high walls around them.
They pile up earth around those cities to capture them.

¹¹They rush past like the wind,
and then they go to attack other cities.

But they are very guilty,
because they think that their own power is their god!"

¹²Then I said, "Yahweh, are you not the eternal God?

You are my Holy One, so we will not die.

So why have you sent those men from Babylonia to judge us and kill us?

You are like our Rock, on top of which we can hide,
so why have you sent them to punish us?

¹³You are pure, and you cannot endure looking at what is evil,
so why are you ignoring men who are treacherous?

Why do you do nothing
to punish those wicked men from Babylonia,
who destroy people who are more righteous than they are?

¹⁴They treat us like fish in the sea,
or like other creatures in the sea, that have no ruler.

¹⁵The soldiers of Babylonia think that we are fish for them to pull out of the sea with hooks
or to catch in their nets, while they rejoice and celebrate.

¹⁶If they catch us, they will worship their weapons with which they captured us
and offer sacrifices to them and burn incense in front of them!

They will say, 'These weapons have enabled us to become rich and eat expensive food.'

¹⁷Will you allow them to continue to conquer people forever?

Will you allow them to destroy people of other nations without any mercy for anyone?"

Chapter 2

¹After I said that, I said to myself, "I will climb up into my guard post,

and stand there in my watchtower.

I will wait there to find out what Yahweh will say,
what he will reply and how I should answer.”

²Then Yahweh replied to me,
“Write plainly on tablets what I am revealing to you in this vision,
and then read it to a messenger
so he can run with it to tell it to other people.

³In this vision I will talk about things that will happen in the future.
Now is not the time when those things will happen,
but they certainly will happen,
and when they occur, they will occur quickly,
and they will not be delayed.
You want those things to happen immediately, but they are not happening.
But wait patiently for them to happen!

⁴Think about the proud people!
They are certainly not doing what is righteous.
But people who are righteous will live
because they faithfully do what I want them to do.

⁵If people live for excess such as wine, they will deceive themselves,
and proud people are never able to rest.
Greedy people open their mouths as wide as the place where dead people are,
and they never have enough,
just like the place of the dead never has enough dead people.
The armies of Babylonia conquer many nations for themselves,
and capture all their people.

⁶But soon all those whom they have captured will ridicule the soldiers from Babylonia!
They will make fun of them, saying,
‘Terrible things will happen to you who have stolen things from other countries!
You got many things by forcing people to give them to you.
But you certainly will not keep those things for long!’

⁷Suddenly those whom you forced to be unjustly indebted to you will rise up

and cause you to tremble,
and they will take away all the things that you have stolen from them.

⁸You stole things from the people of many nations.

You murdered people of many people groups,
and you destroyed their land and their cities.

So those who are still alive will steal valuable things from you.

⁹Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia who build big houses
with money that you got by forcing others to give it to you.

You are proud, and you think that your houses will be safe
because you have built them in places where you can easily defend them.

¹⁰But because you have destroyed others,
you have caused your family
and yourselves shame!

¹¹The stones in the walls of your houses cry out to accuse you,
and the beams in your ceilings also say the same things!

¹²Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia who kill people in order to build cities,
cities that you build by using money that you have gotten by committing crimes.

¹³But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has declared that everything that is built by people who do things
like that will be destroyed by fire;
they will have worked hard uselessly.

¹⁴But in contrast, like the oceans are filled with water,
the earth will be filled with people who know that Yahweh is very great!

¹⁵Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia,
who cause people who live in nearby countries to become drunk.
You force them to drink a lot of drugged wine
until they are drunk and then they walk around naked
because you are happy when you see that.

¹⁶But you are the ones who soon will be disgraced instead of being honored.
It will be as though you are forced to drink a lot of wine until you will also stagger around, drunk.
You will drink the wine that symbolizes that Yahweh will punish you,
and he will cause others to dishonor you instead of honoring you.

¹⁷You did violent things to the people in Lebanon,
and you killed the wild animals there,
but you will be punished severely for doing that.

You have killed many people
and you have destroyed their lands and their cities.

¹⁸You people of Babylonia need to know that your idols are completely useless,
because it is people who made them.

Statues that have been carved or made in a mold deceive you.

Those who trust in idols
are trusting in things that they themselves created,
things that cannot speak!

¹⁹Terrible things will happen to you who say to lifeless idols that are made of wood,
'Wake up!'

Stone idols certainly cannot tell you what you should do;
they look nice because they are covered with silver and gold,
but they are not alive.

²⁰But Yahweh is in his holy temple;
everyone on the earth should be silent in his presence!"

Chapter 3

¹A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. ²Yahweh, I have heard about you;
and I revere you because of all the amazing things that you have done.

In our time, do again some of those things that you did long ago!
Even when you are angry with us,
act mercifully toward us!

³In a vision, I saw God, the Holy One, coming from the region of Teman in Edom;
I also saw him coming from the Paran hills in the region of Sinai.
His glory filled the sky,
and the earth was full of people who were praising him.

⁴His glory was like the sunrise;
rays flashed from his hands

where he keeps his power.

⁵He sent plagues in front of him,
and other plagues came behind him.

⁶When he stopped, the earth shook.

When he looked at the nations,
all the people trembled.

The hills and mountains that have existed since the beginning of time collapsed and crumbled.

He is the only one who exists eternally!

⁷In the vision I saw the people who live in tents in the region of Cushan were very afraid,
and the people in the region of Midian were trembling.

⁸Yahweh, was it because you were angry with the rivers and streams that you struck them?

Did the seas cause you to be furious,
with the result that you rode through them with horses that were pulling chariots
that you used to bring victory to your cause?

⁹It was as though you uncovered your bow and prepared to shoot it,
and had grasped arrows to put to your bow.

Then you split open the earth,
and streams burst out.

¹⁰It is as though the mountains saw you doing that,
and they trembled in pain.
The water rushed by in floods;
it was as though the deep ocean roared and caused its waves to rise up high.

¹¹The sun and moon stopped moving in the sky,
while your lightning flashed past like a swift arrow,
and your glittering spear flashed.

¹²Being very angry, you walked across the earth
and trampled the armies of many nations!

¹³But you also went to rescue your people,
and to save the one whom you have chosen.
You struck down the leader of those wicked people
and took away all his power completely.

¹⁴With his own spear you destroyed the leader of those soldiers who rushed like a whirlwind to attack and scatter us,

thinking that they could conquer us as easily as they defeat the weak people who hide from them.

¹⁵You walked through the sea with your horses to destroy our enemies,
and caused the waves to surge.

¹⁶When I saw that vision,
my heart pounded
and my lips quivered
because I became afraid.

My legs became weak
and I shook, because I was terrified.

But I will wait quietly for the people of Babylonia, those who invaded our country, to experience disasters!

¹⁷Therefore,
even if there are no blossoms on the fig trees,
and there are no grapes on the grapevines,
and even if there are no olives growing on the olive trees,
and there are no crops in the fields,
and even if the flocks of sheep and goats die in the fields,
and there are no cattle in the stalls, this is what I will do.

¹⁸I will rejoice because of Yahweh!
I will be joyful because my God is the one who saves me!

¹⁹Yahweh the Lord is the one who gives me strength,
and he enables me to climb safely like a deer does,
he makes me walk on my high hills.

(This message is for the choir director:

When this prayer is sung, it is to be accompanied by people playing stringed instruments.)

Zephaniah

Chapter 1

¹Yahweh's message came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, the grandson of Gedaliah, and the great-grandson of Amariah, whose father was King Hezekiah. Yahweh gave this message during the time when King Amon's son Josiah was the king of Judah.

²Yahweh said,

"I will sweep away everything that is on the earth.

³I will sweep away people and animals.

I will sweep away birds and fish.

I will get rid of wicked people;

so that there will be no more wicked people on the earth."

⁴"These are some of the things that I will do:

I will punish the people who live in Jerusalem and other places in Judah,

and destroy everything that has been used in the worship of Baal and

and cause people to no longer remember the names of the pagan priests

or the other priests who have turned away from me.

⁵I will get rid of those who go up on the roofs of their houses and worship the sun, moon, and stars,

and those who claim to worship me but also swear using the name of their king.

⁶Finally, I will get rid of all those who previously worshiped me but no longer do;

those who no longer seek my help or request me to tell them what they should do."

⁷Be silent in front of Yahweh the Lord,

because it will soon be the time when Yahweh will judge and punish people.

Yahweh has prepared himself to get rid of the people of Judah;

they will be like animals that are set apart to be slaughtered for sacrifices,

and he has chosen their enemies to be the ones who will get rid of them.

⁸Yahweh says, "On that day when I will get rid of the people of Judah,

I will punish their officials and the king's sons,

and all those who worship foreign gods—

⁹including those who show that they revere their god Dagan by avoiding stepping on the threshold of his temple,

and those who do violent things and tell lies in the temples of their gods."

¹⁰Yahweh also says,

“On that day, people will cry out at the Fish Gate of Jerusalem.

People will wail in the Second Quarter of the city,

and people will hear a loud crash of buildings collapsing in the hills.

¹¹All you people who live in the market area of Jerusalem should wail,
because all those who sell goods for money will be slaughtered.

¹²It will be as though I will light lanterns to search in dark places in Jerusalem
for those who have become very satisfied with their behavior and complacent about their sins.
They think that I, Yahweh, will do neither good nor bad things, as if I do not even exist!

¹³So I have decided that armies will come and carry off their valuable possessions,
after destroying their houses.

The people will build new homes,
but they will not live in them;
they will plant vineyards again,
but they will never drink any wine made from grapes that grow.”

¹⁴It will soon be the day when Yahweh will punish people.
It will be here quickly.

It will be a time when even brave soldiers will cry loudly.

¹⁵It will be a time when God shows that he is very angry,
a time when people experience much distress and trouble.
It will be a time when many things are ruined, destroyed, and when everyone goes away.
It will be a time when it is very gloomy and dark,
when the clouds are very black.

¹⁶It will be a time when soldiers will blow trumpets to call other soldiers to battle.
Your enemies will tear down the walls around your cities
and the high towers at the corners of those walls.

¹⁷Because you sinned against Yahweh,
he will cause you to experience great distress;
you will walk around groping as blind people do.
Your blood will flow from your bodies like falling soil,
and your corpses will lie on the ground and rot.

¹⁸At the time that Yahweh shows that he is very angry with you,
you will not be able to save yourselves
by giving silver or gold to your enemies.
Because Yahweh is very jealous,
he will send a fire to burn up the entire world,
and he will completely get rid, in a most terrifying way, of all the wicked people who live on the earth.

Chapter 2

¹You people of Judah who ought to be ashamed,
gather together to ask God to be merciful to you.

²Yahweh is very angry with you,
so gather together now,
before he punishes you—before he punishes you
and sweeps you away as the wind blows away the chaff.

³All you people in Judah who are humble,
worship Yahweh and obey what he has commanded.
Try to do what is right
and to be humble.

If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will protect you
on the day when he punishes people.

⁴When Yahweh punishes Philistia,
the cities of Gaza and Ashkelon will lose all their inhabitants.
Ashdod will be attacked and the people will be driven away at noon, when they are resting.
The people of the city of Ekron will also be driven out.

⁵And terrible things will happen to you people of Philistia who live near the sea,
because Yahweh has said he will punish you, also.
He will get rid of all of you; not one of you will survive!

⁶The land of Philistia near the sea will become a pasture,
a place for shepherds and their sheep pens.

⁷The people of Judah who survive will possess that land.
At night they will sleep in the deserted houses in Ashkelon.

Yahweh will take care of them;
he will enable them to prosper again.

⁸Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God of the Israelites, says this:

"I have heard the people of Moab and Ammon
insult my people and plan to conquer my people's country.

⁹So now, as surely as I live, I will destroy Moab and Ammon
as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Their land will be a place where there are nettles and salt pits;
it will be ruined forever, with none of their people living there!
My people who survive will take away all their valuable possessions
and also occupy their land."

¹⁰The people of Moab and Ammon will get what they deserve for being proud,
because they made fun of the people who belong to Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

¹¹Yahweh will cause them to be terrified
when he destroys all the gods of their countries.
Then people from every nation will worship Yahweh,
each in his own country.

¹²Yahweh says that he will also slaughter the people of Ethiopia.

¹³Yahweh will punish and destroy Assyria,
that land northeast of us, and cause its capital Nineveh
to become ruined and deserted, and as dry as the desert.

¹⁴Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and many kinds of wild animals will lie down there.
Owls and crows will sit on the columns of the destroyed buildings,
and they will hoot through the windows.
There will be rubble in the doorways,
and the valuable cedar beams in the roofs of the buildings will become visible.

¹⁵The people of Nineveh used to be happy and proud,
thinking that they were very safe.
They were always saying,
"Our city is the greatest city;
there is no city as great as ours!"

But now it will become a horrible place to see,
a place where wild animals make their dens.
And everyone who passes by there will hiss and scorn that city,
and shake their fists to show that they detest that city very much.

Chapter 3

¹Terrible things will happen to Jerusalem,
the city whose people have rebelled against Yahweh
and who have become unacceptable to him because of the sins that they have committed.
They act violently toward others and they oppress other people.

²The people there pay no attention to the prophets whom Yahweh has sent to tell them the wrong things that they are doing
and try to correct them.
The people in Jerusalem do not trust in their God or worship him.

³Their leaders are like roaring lions;
they are like wolves that attack during the evening,
and eat everything that they kill,
with the result that the next morning there is nothing left of those animals to eat.

⁴The prophets in Jerusalem are proud,
and the priests give messages that no one should trust.
They make the temple unholy by doing things that are against the law of Moses.

⁵But Yahweh is also in the city, and he never does what is wrong.
He treats people justly, day after day;
but wicked people are never ashamed about their wrongdoing.

⁶Yahweh says this:
"I have destroyed many nations;
I have destroyed their strong city walls and towers.
Now I have caused the streets in those cities to be completely deserted.
Those cities are ruined and there is no one still alive there.
They are all dead.

⁷So I said to myself,
'Because of what I have done to those other nations,

surely the people of Jerusalem will honor me now
and allow me to correct them.

If they do that, I will not destroy them;

I will not punish them like I said that I would do.'

But in spite of knowing how I punished those other nations,
they were still eager to get up early each morning
and continue to perform evil deeds."

⁸This is what Yahweh declares:

"Wait for the day when I will take action to plunder you!

I have decided to gather the people of the kingdoms of the earth
and cause them to know that I am very angry with them.

All over the earth I will punish and destroy people;

I will burn them up with my anger as if it were fire!

⁹When that happens, I will cause all people to be changed
and enable them to speak only what is pure,
in order that everyone can worship me as one people.

¹⁰Then my people who were forced to go to other countries, those who live along the upper part of the Nile River
in Ethiopia,
will come to me and bring offerings to me.

¹¹At that time, you people in Jerusalem will no longer be ashamed about what has happened to you,
because you no longer will be rebelling against me.
I will get rid of all the people among you who are very proud.
No one on Zion, my holy hill, will strut around proudly anymore.

¹²Those who are still alive in Israel will be poor and humble;
they will trust in me.

¹³Those people who are still alive in Israel will not do anything wrong;
they will tell no lies or deceive anyone.
They will eat and sleep safely,
because no one will cause them to be afraid."

¹⁴You people who live in Jerusalem and other places in Israel,
sing and shout loudly!
Be glad, and rejoice with all your inner being,

¹⁵because Yahweh will take away the charges against you,
and he will make your enemies go far away from you!

Yahweh himself, the king of the Israelites, will live among you,
and you will never again be afraid that others will harm you.

¹⁶At that time, other people will say to us people of Jerusalem,
“You people of Jerusalem, do not be afraid; do not become weak or discouraged.”

¹⁷Yahweh your God will live among you.

He is mighty, and he will rescue you.

He will be very happy about you;

because he loves you, he will cause you to rest without being anxious.

He will sing loudly to rejoice about you,

¹⁸like people who are happy at a festival. Yahweh says, “I will no longer allow any enemies to destroy you. You will no longer be defeated or ashamed.

¹⁹Truly, I will severely punish all those who oppressed you.

I will rescue those who are helpless and those who were forced to go to other countries, just as a shepherd would rescue his lost sheep.

I will give them praise and honor in every country where they were exiled,
places where they had been disgraced.

²⁰At that time, I will gather you together and bring you back home to Israel.

I will cause you to greatly praised and honored
among all the nations of the earth.

You will see when I bring your people home again.”

This is what Yahweh, has declared!

Haggai

Chapter 1

¹The prophet Haggai received a message from Yahweh in the second year after Darius had become king of Persia. Haggai received this message on the first day of the sixth month of that year. He told it to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel. Haggai also told the message to the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak. He said, ²"Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says this: 'The people {of Judah} are saying that it is not yet the right time for them to rebuild my temple.'" ³Yahweh then told the prophet Haggai to tell the people this: ⁴"It is not right for you to live in comfortable houses while you have still not repaired Yahweh's temple! ⁵So this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you: 'Think about what you are doing!

⁶You are planting many seeds, but you are not harvesting many crops.

You eat food, but you never get enough to eat.

You drink wine, but you never get enough to satisfy you.

You still have clothes to wear, but they are so worn-out that they no longer keep you warm.

You earn money, but it is not enough to pay your expenses.' ⁷So this is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you: 'Think about what you should do differently! ⁸Go up into the hills and cut down trees! Bring the timber from them here to Jerusalem and rebuild my temple! This will honor me, and I will be proud of my temple again.' That is what Yahweh is telling you. ⁹Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is also telling you, 'There is a reason why you have not grown many crops even though you have planted many seeds. The reason is that I kept the crops from growing. I did that because you have built comfortable homes for yourselves, but you have not repaired my temple. ¹⁰Because you were not repairing my temple, I kept the crops from growing by making it so dry that no rain fell from the sky and there was not even any moisture on the ground in the mornings. ¹¹I have kept the plants from growing in the fields and on the mountains. I have kept your wheat and barley from growing. I have kept your vines from producing grapes. I have kept your olive trees from producing olives. Even though you worked very hard, you were not able to grow enough food. As a result, both people and animals have not had enough to eat.'" ¹²{The governor of Judah,} Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, knew that Yahweh their God had told the prophet Haggai to speak this message. The high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, also knew this. The rest of the people who had returned to Judah from exile in Babylon also knew this. And they all respected Yahweh. So they all obeyed the message that Yahweh their God had spoken. ¹³Yahweh was pleased that the people had obeyed him. So } Yahweh gave Haggai, his messenger, another message to speak to the people. Haggai said, "Yahweh is telling you, 'I am with you!'" ¹⁴This message from Yahweh made the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, want to rebuild the temple. It also made the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, want to rebuild the temple. It also made the rest of the people want to rebuild the temple. So they all gathered together and started rebuilding the temple of Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, their God. ¹⁵They started the work on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia.

Chapter 2

¹Yahweh gave another message to the prophet Haggai on the twenty-first day of the seventh month {of Darius' second year as king of Persia}. Yahweh told Haggai, ²"I want you to ask a question to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and to the rest of the people. Ask them, ³'Is there still anyone among you who remembers how glorious the temple used to look? If so, do you

think that the temple looks glorious now? You must agree that it does not look very glorious at all.”⁴ {But after Haggai had asked those questions, he said,} “Yahweh is telling you, Zerubbabel, “Now do not be discouraged!’ Yahweh is also telling you high priest, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and all the Jewish people, ‘Do not be discouraged!’ Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you, ‘Repair the temple, because I am with you {to help you}!’⁵ That is what I promised your ancestors when I brought them out of slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them. {And I am still keeping that promise now, since} my Spirit is living among you. So do not be afraid {of the people who are trying to keep you from rebuilding my temple}!’⁶ Do not be afraid, because Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you, ‘Soon it will be as if I am shaking the sky and the earth, the sea and the land.’⁷ It will seem that way because I will be making the other nations respect you. Then those people will bring their treasures to this temple, and I will make it very glorious again.’ That is what Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, is telling you.⁸ Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, “The silver and gold that the people of other nations have really belong to me.”⁹ Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, says, ‘The temple will be even more glorious in the future than it was in the past.’ Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, also says, ‘I will protect the temple from people who would want to destroy it.’”¹⁰ Yahweh spoke another message to the prophet Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of Darius’ second year as king of Persia. Yahweh told Haggai, ¹¹“This is what I, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, am telling you to do. Ask the priests a question about what Moses directed in his instructions. Say, ¹²‘Suppose a priest takes {from the altar} some meat that a person has offered to Yahweh. And suppose the priest carries the meat within his robe. If his robe touches some bread or stew or wine or olive oil or any other food, does that food become like food that someone has offered to Yahweh?’” When Haggai asked the priests this question, they replied, “No, it does not.”¹³ Then Haggai asked the priests this question: “Suppose someone becomes unclean by touching a dead body. If this unclean person then touches any food, does that food also become unclean?” The priests replied, “Yes, that food does become unclean.”¹⁴ Then Haggai said, “Yahweh is telling you this: ‘I consider you Jewish people to be unclean as well! And since you are unclean, the crops that you grow and the animals that you raise are also unclean. And so you cannot offer those unclean crops or the unclean meat from those animals on the altar at the temple.’¹⁵ So now think about what has been happening to you during this whole time that you have not been rebuilding my temple.”¹⁶ During that time, when you thought you could take 20 measures of grain from a heap, you found that there were only 10 measures in the heap. When you thought you could draw 50 measures of wine out of a wine vat, you found that there were only 20 measures in the vat.”¹⁷ I caused blight, mildew, and hail to destroy all the crops that you worked so hard to raise. Even so, you did not do what I wanted you to do and rebuild my temple.’ This is what Yahweh is saying to you.”¹⁸ Think about what has been happening to you during the whole time between when you laid the foundation of my temple {when you first returned from exile} until this day, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Yes, think about that!”¹⁹ You have no grain left in your barns. Your grapevines have not been producing grapes. Your fig trees have not been producing figs. Your pomegranate trees have not been producing pomegranates. Your olive trees have not been producing olives. But from now on, I will bless you {with an abundance of crops}!”²⁰ Yahweh then gave a second message to Haggai on that same day. He said, ²¹“Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, this for me: ‘It is going to be as if I am shaking the sky and the earth.’²² It will seem that way because I am going to stop kingdoms from ruling over other kingdoms. I am going to make strong nations weak. I am going to do this by making the nations fight wars against each other. When they do, they will completely destroy one another’s armies.’”²³ Tell Zerubbabel for me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, ‘After I destroy the armies of the other kingdoms, I am going to make you powerful, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant.’ Tell him for me, Yahweh, ‘Just as a king seals his orders with a signet ring, so I will use you to accomplish my purposes.’ Tell him for me, Yahweh, the commander of the heavenly armies, ‘I am going to do this because I have chosen you!’”

Zechariah

Chapter 1

¹When Darius had been the emperor of Persia for two years, in the eighth month of his reign, Yahweh gave Zechariah the prophet, son of Berekiah and grandson of Iddo the prophet, this message:

²"I was very angry with your ancestors. ³So tell this to the people: Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this: 'Return to me, and if you do that, I will help you again. ⁴Do not be like your ancestors. Prophets, who have now died, continually I proclaimed to your ancestors that they should stop doing the evil things that they were always doing. But they refused to pay attention to what I said. ⁵Your ancestors have died and are now in their graves. Even the prophets did not live forever either. ⁶But the commands and the decrees that I had instructed my servants the prophets to tell them—your ancestors did not obey them, so I punished them. So then they repented and said that I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, had done to them what they deserved for their evil behavior, just like I had said I would do.'"

⁷On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, Yahweh gave another message to me.

⁸During the night I had a vision. In the vision I saw an angel who was on a red horse. He was in a narrow valley among some myrtle trees. Behind him were angels on other horses—red, reddish-brown, and white horses.

⁹I asked the angel who had been talking to me, "Sir, who are those angels on the horses?"

He replied, "I will show you who they are."

¹⁰Then the angel who had stopped under the myrtle trees explained. He said, "They are the angels whom Yahweh has sent to patrol the entire world."

¹¹Then those angels reported to the angel of Yahweh who was under the myrtle trees, "We have traveled throughout the world, and we have found out that the army of the emperor has conquered nations throughout the world, and that they are now helpless and inactive."

¹²Then the angel asked, "Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, how long will you continue to not act mercifully toward Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah? You have been angry with them for seventy years!" ¹³So Yahweh spoke kindly to the angel who had talked to me, saying things that comforted him.

¹⁴Then the angel who had been talking with me said to me, "Proclaim this to the people of Jerusalem: Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says that he is very concerned about the people who live on Mount Zion and in the other parts of Jerusalem. ¹⁵And he is very angry with the nations that are proud and feel safe. He was only a little bit angry with Judah, but they caused them to suffer much more. ¹⁶Therefore, he says that he will go back to Jerusalem and help the people. It will be as if he himself had surveyed and measured all the land in the city.

¹⁷Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also said to tell people in his cities in Judah that they will soon be very prosperous again. He will encourage the people of Jerusalem again, and he will again choose Jerusalem as his special city."

¹⁸Then I looked up and saw four animal horns in front of me. ¹⁹I asked the angel who had been speaking to me, "What are those horns?"

He replied, "Those horns represent the nations that forced the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah and Israel to go to other countries."

²⁰Then Yahweh showed me four blacksmiths. ²¹I asked, "What are those men coming to do?"

He replied, "The nations that those horns represent scattered the people of Judah, so they suffered greatly. But these blacksmiths are coming to frighten and destroy those nations and to throw down their horns, their power—all those nations who had attacked the land of Judah."

Chapter 2

¹Then I looked up and saw a man with a surveyor's line. ²I asked him, "Where are you going?"

He replied, "I am going to survey Jerusalem, to determine how wide it is and how long it is."

³Then the angel who had been talking to me started to leave, and another angel walked toward him. ⁴The second angel said to him, "Run and tell that young man with the surveyor's line: Some day there will be very many people and livestock in Jerusalem, so they will not all be able to live inside the city walls; many will live outside the walls in the open country. ⁵Yahweh says that he himself will be like a wall of fire around the city, and he will be among the people with his glory."

⁶Yahweh declares to the people who the Babylonians took away as slaves: "Run! Run! Flee from Babylonia, and flee from the places where I scattered you to the four winds!"

⁷Run! You who now live in Babylon, run here to Jerusalem!" ⁸Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, honored me by telling me to go to the nations who took everything you owned, for those who harm you harm what is most precious to him! After he did that, he said this to me: ⁹"Tell them that I, Yahweh, will attack them. Their own slaves will take back their possessions from them, the people who had taken them in the first place." When that happens, you Jewish people will know that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is the one who sent me, Zechariah, as a prophet.

¹⁰Yahweh says, "You people of Jerusalem, shout and be happy, because I will come to you and live among you!"

¹¹At that time, people of many nations will join with Yahweh and become his people. He will live among all of you; and you will know that Yahweh, powerful Commander of the angel armies, is the one who sent me to you as a prophet. ¹²The people of Judah will be a very special part of his own land, and Jerusalem will again be the city that he has chosen. ¹³Everyone, everywhere, should be silent in the presence of Yahweh, because he is about to come down again from where he lives in heaven to do great things for us.

Chapter 3

¹Then Yahweh showed me Joshua, the high priest, who was standing in front of the angel that Yahweh had sent. And Satan was standing at Joshua's right side, ready to accuse him of having sinned. ²But the angel of Yahweh said to Satan, "Satan, may Yahweh rebuke you! He has chosen Jerusalem to be his special city, and may he rebuke you! This man, Joshua, has been brought back from Babylonia; he is certainly like a burning stick that someone has snatched from a fire."

³Now as Joshua was standing in front of the angel, he was wearing filthy clothes. ⁴So the angel said to those other angels who were standing in front of him, "Take off those clothes he is wearing!"

After they did that, the angel said to Joshua, "Look! I have taken away the guilt of your sins, and I will put beautiful clothes on you instead."

⁵Then the angel said to them, "Put a clean turban on his head!" So they put a clean turban on his head and new clothes on him, while the angel of Yahweh was standing there looking on.

⁶Then the same angel said this to Joshua: ⁷"Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, says that if you do what I want you to do and obey my instructions, you will be in charge of my temple and its courtyard. And I will allow you to be part of this group of angels who are always standing near to me and can speak with me at any time.

⁸Joshua, you are the high priest, and your associates are sitting in front of you. The fact that they are here means that I will bring a special servant of mine, someone who I will call the Branch." ⁹Then the angel of Yahweh placed a stone in front of Joshua and said to him and to the other men with him: "Look at the stone that I have put in front of Joshua. There are seven sides on the stone. I will engrave a message on that stone, and in one day I will remove the guilt of all the people of this country.

¹⁰At that time, each of you will invite his friends to come and sit under his grapevine and under his fig tree. That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, declares."

Chapter 4

¹Then the angel who had been talking with me returned, and he called to me while I was thinking deeply, as though I had been asleep. ²He asked me, "What do you see?"

I replied, "I see a lampstand made completely of gold. There is a small bowl for olive oil at the top, and there are seven small lamps around the bowl, and a place for seven wicks on each lamp. ³Furthermore, I see two olive trees, one at the right side of the lampstand and one at the left side."

⁴I asked the angel who was talking with me, "Sir, what do these things mean?"

⁵He replied, "Surely you know what they mean."

I replied, "No, I do not know."

⁶Then the angel said to me, "This is the message from Yahweh to you, Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah: 'You will do what I want you to do, but it will not be by your own strength or power. It will be done by the power of my Spirit,' says Yahweh, commander of the angel armies." ⁷The angel continued to speak to me: "Zerubbabel, you have many difficult matters to handle. They are like high mountains. But it will be as though they became flat land. And you will bring to the new temple the final stone, the highest stone, to complete it. When you set it in place, all the people will shout repeatedly, 'It is beautiful! May God bless it!'"

⁸Then Yahweh gave me another message. ⁹He said to me, "Zerubbabel himself laid some of the stones for the foundation of the temple, and he will put some of the last stones in their places." Then I said to the other men with him, "When that happens, the people will know that it is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who has sent me to you.

¹⁰The people who are mocking the slow way in which they are building the temple again—these same people will be glad when they see Zerubbabel holding a plumb line in his hand.

The seven lamps represent the eyes of Yahweh, who looks back and forth at everything that happens all over the earth." ¹¹Then I asked the angel, "What is the meaning of the two olive trees, one on each side of the lampstand?

¹²And what is the meaning of the two olive branches, one alongside each of the gold pipes from which olive oil flows to the lamps?"

¹³He replied, "Surely you know what they are."

I replied, "No, sir, I do not know."

¹⁴So he said, "They represent the two men whom the Lord who rules the whole earth has appointed."

Chapter 5

¹I looked up again, and I saw a scroll that was flying through the air.

²The angel asked me, "What do you see?"

I replied, "I see a flying scroll that is huge, nine meters long and four and a half meters wide."

³Then he said to me, "On this scroll Yahweh has written the words that he is speaking to curse the entire land of Judah. On one side of the scroll it is written that every thief will be banished. On the other side it is written that everyone who tells a lie when he is calling on Yahweh to witness that he is telling the truth will also be banished from the country. ⁴The Commander of the angel armies says, 'I will send this scroll to the places where thieves live and to the houses of those who use my name when they call on me to witness that they are telling the truth. This scroll will stay in their houses until those houses and all their wood and stones are destroyed.'"

⁵Then the angel who had been talking to me came closer to me and said, "Look up and see what is coming!"

⁶I asked him, "What is it?"

He replied, "It is a big barrel for measuring grain. But it contains a record of the sins that everyone in this nation has committed."

⁷Then the angel lifted the barrel's cover, which was made of lead. There was a woman sitting inside the barrel! ⁸The angel said, "She represents the wicked things that people do." Then he pushed her back into the barrel and closed the very heavy lid again.

⁹Then I looked up and saw two women in front of me. They were flying toward us, with their wings spread out in the wind. Their wings were large, like storks' wings. They lifted the barrel up into the sky.

¹⁰I asked the angel who had been talking to me, "Where are they taking that barrel?"

¹¹He replied, "They are taking it to Babylonia to build a temple for it. When the temple is finished, they will set the barrel there on a pedestal for people to worship it."

Chapter 6

¹I looked up again, and I saw four chariots coming toward me. They were coming between two mountains that were made of bronze. ²The first chariot was pulled by red horses, the second chariot was pulled by black horses, ³the third chariot was pulled by white horses, and the fourth chariot was pulled by spotted gray horses. ⁴I asked the angel who had been speaking to me, "Sir, what do those chariots mean?"

⁵The angel replied, "These chariots and their horses represent the four winds going out from heaven; they have come from standing in the presence of the Lord who controls the entire earth. They will go across the sky in four directions. ⁶The chariot pulled by black horses will go north, the one pulled by white horses will go west, and the one pulled by spotted gray horses will go south."

⁷When those powerful horses left, they were eager to go throughout the world. As they were leaving, the angel said to them, "Go throughout the world and see what is happening!" So they left to do that.

⁸Then the angel called to me and said, "Look, the chariots that have gone north will mollify the Spirit of Yahweh by punishing the people in that region."

⁹Then Yahweh gave me another message. ¹⁰He said, "Today Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah will be bringing some silver and gold from the people who were exiled in Babylon. As soon as they arrive, go to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. ¹¹Take some of that silver and gold from them and make a crown. Then put it on the head of

Jehozadak's son Joshua, the high priest. ¹²Tell him that I, the Commander of the angel armies, say that the man who is called the Branch will come. He will leave the place where he is now, and he will supervise those who build my temple. ¹³He is the one who will tell those who will build my temple what to do. He will wear royal clothing and he will sit on his throne and rule. He will also be a priest sitting on his throne, and there will be peace between the two roles. ¹⁴The crown was handed over to Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen son of Zephaniah, and they were to place it in the house of Yahweh, as a way to honor them." ¹⁵People who are living far away will come and help to build Yahweh's temple. When that happens, you people will know that Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, have sent me to you people. That will happen if all of you faithfully obey Yahweh, your God.

Chapter 7

¹When Darius had been the emperor for almost four years, on the fourth day of Kislev (which was the ninth month in their calendar), Yahweh gave me another message. ²The people of the city of Bethel sent two men, Sharezer and Regem-Melek,, along with some other men, to the temple of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to request that Yahweh be kind to them. ³They also asked the priests at Yahweh's temple and the prophets this question: "For many years, during the fifth month and during the seventh month of each year, we have mourned and fasted. Should we continue to do that?"

⁴Then Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, gave me a message. ⁵He told me to say this to the priests and, in fact, to everyone in the whole land: "Tell me whom you were honoring when you did not eat but went around in dirty clothing. You were not really honoring me, were you? ⁶And when you feasted at my temple, you did it just to have a good time; you did not really intend to honor me, did you? ⁷This is exactly what I kept telling the former prophets to proclaim to the people, when the people in Jerusalem and the nearby towns were many and prosperous, and when people also lived in the southern Judean wilderness, and in the foothills to the west."

⁸Yahweh gave another message to me: ⁹"Tell the people that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: 'I told you to do what is just, to act kindly and mercifully toward each other, in order to honor my covenant with you. ¹⁰I told you not to oppress widows or orphans or foreigners or poor people. I said to not even think about doing evil to anyone else.'"

¹¹But the people refused to pay attention to what Yahweh had said. They refused to cooperate with him; they refused to listen to what he said. ¹²He had given these messages for his Spirit to repeat to the prophets in earlier times. The prophets were meant to speak these messages to the people. But the people were very stubborn; they would not listen to the law of Moses or to any message from God. So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, became very angry with them.

¹³In those times, when Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, called to the people, they refused to listen. So he said, "In exactly the same way, I will refuse to listen when they call to me. ¹⁴And I will scatter them among many nations, nations that they have never been to before. I will scatter them as a storm scatters leaves. After they are gone, their own land will be empty, with no one living there. No one will travel through it and no one will come back to it, because they have turned it, their most pleasant land, into a wilderness."

Chapter 8

¹Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²"This is what I, Yahweh the Commander of the angel armies, say: I love the people of Jerusalem; I love them very much, and I am very angry with their enemies.

³So this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say: Some day I will return to Mount Zion and I will live there. At that time, Jerusalem will be called The City of Faithful People, and Mount Zion will be called The Mountain that Belongs to Yahweh."

⁴Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "Some day old men and old women will again sit along the streets of Jerusalem, each of them holding a cane because of their being very old. ⁵And the city streets will be full of boys and girls playing."

⁶Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "When those things happen, it will seem marvelous to the people who are still alive, but it certainly will not seem marvelous to me!"

⁷Yahweh also says this: "I will bring my people back from the land to the east—Babylonia—and from the land to the west—Egypt—to which they had to go. ⁸I will bring them back to Judah, and they will again live in Jerusalem. They will again worship me as my people, and I will be their God. I will be faithful to them and act toward them in a just manner."

⁹Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "When the foundation for my temple was laid, there were prophets there who gave messages from me. Some of you people heard what those prophets said. So be brave while you are building the temple, in order that you may finish building it. ¹⁰Before you started to rebuild the temple, your fields gave no crops, no return for either man or beast working in them. And people were afraid to go anywhere because I had caused people to be against each other. ¹¹But now I will act differently toward you people who are still alive, differently than I did previously. That is what I, Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, say.

¹²From now on, I will give you peace. Your grapevines will produce grapes, and good crops will grow in your fields. There will be rain from the sky. I will always give all these things to you people who are still alive. ¹³You people of Judah and Israel, the people of other nations think of you when they speak of what a curse means. But I will rescue you, and I will give you many good things. So do not be afraid; work hard to finish building the temple."

¹⁴Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "When your ancestors caused me to become very angry, I did not change my mind about that. Instead, I indeed punished them. ¹⁵But now I will do something different. I am planning to do good things to the people of Jerusalem and other towns in Judah again. So do not be afraid. ¹⁶These are the things that you should do: You should always tell the truth to each other. In the courts, your judges must make decisions according to what is correct and fair. ¹⁷Do not plan to do evil things to others, and do approve of swearing false accusations against others. I hate all those things."

¹⁸Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, spoke to me again. ¹⁹This is what he said: "The times when you people of Judah abstain from food during the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months of each year will become times when you celebrate pleasant and joyful festivals instead. But you must want to speak truthfully and to be peaceful."

²⁰Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "Some day people from many people groups and foreign cities will come here to Jerusalem. ²¹People from one city will go to the people in another city and say, 'Let us go together to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh and request him to bless us; we ourselves are going.' ²²And people from many people groups and from powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh and request him to bless them."

²³Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "At that time, this is what will happen everywhere: For every Jewish person, there will be ten foreigners, people who speak a different language, who will come and grab the fringe of his robe. They will say to him, 'We have heard people say that God is with you. So allow us to go with you to Jerusalem to worship him.' People from every nation and language will do this."

Chapter 9

¹This is another message that I received from Yahweh about the region of Hadrach and the city of Damascus, the place where they get their rest. All the eyes of the nations and the people of the tribe of Israel are all looking toward Yahweh, to see what he will say. ²This message is also about the people in the region of Hamath near to

Damascus, and about the people in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, people who are very wise. ³The people in Tyre have built a high wall around their city. They piled up huge amounts of silver and gold like other people pile up soil when they dig in the streets. ⁴But I, Yahweh, will make them lose everything, including their ships in which their men fight on the sea. Their city will burn to the ground. ⁵The people in the city of Ashkelon will see that happen, and they will become very afraid. The people in the city of Gaza will shake because they are terrified, and the people in the city of Ekron will shake too, because they no longer hope to escape enemies. The king of Gaza will die; no one will live any longer in Ashkelon. ⁶Yahweh says, "Foreigners will occupy the city of Ashdod. I will no longer allow the people in all those cities of Philistia to be proud. ⁷I will no longer allow them to eat meat that still has blood in it, and I will forbid them to eat food that they offered to idols. At that time, the people in the region of Philistia who survive will worship me; they will become like a clan in Judah. The people of the city of Ekron will become part of my people, as the people of the city of Jebus did when the Israelites conquered them. ⁸I will protect my land, and I will not allow any enemy soldiers to enter it. No enemies will harm my people again, because I myself will be watching over them carefully. ⁹Rejoice very much, you people of Jerusalem and shout joyfully,

because your king will be coming to you.

He is righteous and victorious;

he will be gentle,

and he will be riding on a donkey,

on a young female donkey. ¹⁰I will destroy the chariots in the region of Ephraim that are used in war and all the horses in Jerusalem that they take into battle. I will break all the bows they use in wars.

Your king will proclaim that he will cause things to go well and peacefully among the nations. He will rule the area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea, and from the Euphrates River to the most distant places on the earth.

¹¹As for you, my people of Jerusalem, because of the blood that flowed when I made my covenant with you, I will free your people whom they took to other countries, where it was as though they were prisoners in a waterless pit.

¹²You people who were prisoners in those countries who still believe that I will help you, return to Judah, for I will defend you there. Today I declare that I will give you two blessings for each of the troubles that you have experienced.

¹³I will cause Judah to be like my bow, and I will cause Israel to be like my arrow. I will enable you young men of Jerusalem to fight against the soldiers of Greece; you will be like a warrior's sword." ¹⁴One day Yahweh will appear in the sky above his people, and the arrows that he shoots will be like lightning bolts. Yahweh our Lord will blow his trumpet, and he will march with the powerful storms that come from the land of Teman in the south. ¹⁵Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will protect his people; the soldiers of Judah will attack and defeat their enemies who attack them using slings and stones. Those soldiers of Judah will drink and celebrate and shout like people who are drunk; they will be as full of wine as the bowl that holds the blood of the animals priest kill at the altar—the blood that the priests sprinkle on the corners of the altar. ¹⁶On that day, Yahweh our God will save his people like a shepherd saves his flock of sheep from danger. In our land, they will be like jewels that sparkle in a crown. ¹⁷They will be delightful and beautiful. The young men will become strong from eating grain, and the young women will become strong from drinking new wine.

Chapter 10

¹Ask Yahweh to cause rain to fall in the springtime, because he is the one who makes the clouds from which the rain falls in storms. He causes showers to fall on us, and he causes crops to grow well in the fields. ²What people think that the idols in their houses say is only nonsense, and people who say that they can interpret dreams tell only lies. When they tell people things to comfort them, what they say is useless, so the people who consult them are like lost sheep; they are in danger because they have no one to protect them like sheep with no shepherd.

³Yahweh says, "I am angry with the leaders of my people, and I will punish them. I, Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, I will take care of my people, the people of Judah, like a shepherd takes care of his flock, and I will cause them to be like war horses in battle. ⁴From Judah will come rulers who will be very important. From Judah

will come leaders who will hold the people together, like a tent peg keeps a tent up. From Judah will come leaders who will take the soldiers into war, like a king holding his own bow for battle. From them will come every one of their own leaders. ⁵They will be like mighty warriors who trample their enemies into the mud during battle. I, Yahweh, will be with them, so they will defeat and shame their enemies who ride on horses. ⁶I will make the people of Judah strong, and I will rescue the people of Israel. I will bring them back from the countries to which they were exiled; I will do that because I pity them. Then it will be as though I had never abandoned them because I am Yahweh, their God, and I will answer them when they pray for help. ⁷The people of Israel will then be like strong soldiers; they will be as happy as people who have drunk a lot of wine. Their children will see their fathers being very happy, and they also will be happy because of what I have done for them. ⁸I will signal for my people to return from far away, and I will gather them together in their own country. I will rescue them, and they will become very numerous as they were previously. ⁹I have caused them to be scattered among many people groups, but in those distant countries they will think about me again. They and their children will remain alive and return to Judah. ¹⁰I will bring them back from Egypt and from Assyria; I will bring them back to the regions of Gilead and Lebanon, but there not be enough space for them all to live there. ¹¹I will go before them through their sufferings, as if I were walking through a sea, but I will calm those waves and end their sufferings, as if I were drying up the Nile River. I will defeat the proud soldiers of Assyria, and I will cause Egypt to no longer be powerful. ¹²I will enable my people to be strong, and they will honor me and obey me. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 11

¹You people of Lebanon must open your gates and allow the fire to burn your cedar trees! ²Your cypress trees must be like people who are wailing, because enemies have cut down the cedar trees. Those glorious trees are all gone. The oak trees in the region of Bashan should also be like people who are wailing, because enemies have cut down the oak trees in the dense forest. ³And listen to the shepherds crying because the fertile pastures have been ruined. Listen to the lions roar; they roar because the thick forest where they live near the Jordan River has been ruined.

⁴This is what Yahweh my God said to me: "I want you to supervise this flock of sheep until the flock perishes. ⁵The dealers in sheep will kill the sheep, and no one will punish them. Those who sell the sheep will say, 'I praise Yahweh, because I will become rich!' And the shepherds whom the owners hire do not feel sorry for the sheep.

⁶And similarly, I no longer feel sorry for the people of this country. I am going to allow their fellow countrymen and their king, to oppress them. They will ruin this country, and I will not rescue any of them."

⁷So I became the shepherd of a flock of sheep that dealers were going to slaughter and to sell the meat. Then I took two shepherds' staffs. I named the one staff 'Kindness' and the other staff 'Union.' This is how I began to shepherd the sheep. ⁸But the three shepherds who had been with the flock detested me, and I became impatient with the owners who had hired us all. Within one month I had destroyed those shepherds.

⁹So I said to the dealers, "I will no longer be a shepherd for you. I will allow the ones that are dying to die. I will allow the ones that are getting lost to perish. And I will not prevent those that remain from eating each other."

¹⁰Then I took the staff that I had named 'Kindness,' and I broke it. I did this because Yahweh had told me to cancel the covenant that he had made with all his tribes of Israel. ¹¹So that covenant was ended on that very day. The dealers who were watching me knew by seeing what I was doing that I was giving them a message from Yahweh.

¹²I told them, "If you think it is right, pay me for my work. If you do not think it is right, do not pay me." So they paid me only thirty pieces of silver.

¹³Then Yahweh said to me, "That is a ridiculously small amount of money that they have for your work. So put it into the treasury." So I took the silver to the temple of Yahweh, and I deposited it in the treasury there.

¹⁴Then I broke my second staff, the one that I had named "Union." That indicated that Judah and Israel would no longer be together as brothers.

¹⁵Then Yahweh said to me, "Take again the things that a foolish shepherd uses, ¹⁶because I am going to appoint a new shepherd for the people, one who will not take care of my people. He will be a foolish shepherd: He will ignore the dying sheep and those that have gotten lost. As for the healthy sheep, he will not feed them; instead, he will butcher them for his own food and will tear off their hooves. ¹⁷But terrible things will happen to that foolish shepherd who abandons the flock. May his enemies strike his arm and his right eye with their swords. May he have no more strength in his arm, and may his right eye become completely blind."

Chapter 12

¹This is a message from Yahweh concerning Israel—Yahweh, the one who stretched out the sky, who created the earth, and who gave life to human beings. This is what he says: ²"I will soon cause Jerusalem to be like a cup full of very strong alcoholic drink, and the people of other nations who drink it will stagger around. The people of Judah will drink it, too, for they also will suffer when the enemy besieges Jerusalem. ³At that time, the armies of all the people groups will gather to attack Jerusalem, but I will cause Jerusalem to be like a very heavy rock, and all who try to lift it will be badly injured. This will happen when the armies of all the world's nations attack Jerusalem. ⁴At that time I will cause every one of their enemies' horses to panic, and their riders to become crazy. I will protect the people of Judah, but I will cause all their enemies' horses to become blind. ⁵Then the leaders of Judah will say to themselves, 'The people in Jerusalem encourage us because Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, is the one they worship.'

⁶At that time I will make the leaders of Judah like a pot of fire that someone puts in piles of firewood; and like a burning torch in a field of ripe grain. The leaders of Judah and their soldiers will destroy the people groups surrounding them in all directions. But the people of Jerusalem will remain safe in their own city."

⁷Yahweh will protect those who live in the other places in Judah before he rescues the people of Jerusalem, in order that people will not honor the descendants of David and those in Jerusalem more than the people in all the rest of Judah. ⁸At that time, Yahweh will protect everyone in Jerusalem. The weakest soldiers among them will be as strong as David was, and the descendants of David will be like God; they will lead the others like the angel of Yahweh himself. ⁹"At that time, I will start to destroy all the armies that attack Jerusalem."

¹⁰"I, Yahweh, will cause the descendants of David to have mercy on others, and to beg me to have mercy on themselves. They will gaze at me, whom they pierced." They will cry bitterly, as people cry for a firstborn son, an only son, who has died. ¹¹At that time, many people in Jerusalem will be crying bitterly, as people cry at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹²Many people in Judah will cry, each clan by themselves. The male descendants of David will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves; the male descendants of Nathan will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves. ¹³The male descendants of Levi will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves; the male descendants of Shimei will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves. ¹⁴All the clans will mourn separately, their males by themselves, and their wives by themselves."

Chapter 13

¹At that time it will be as though there is a spring of water that will continuously flow to cleanse the descendants of King David and all the other people in Jerusalem from the guilt of the sins that they have committed, especially from becoming unacceptable to Yahweh by worshiping idols.

²Yahweh, the Commander of angel armies, says, "At that time, I will prevent people from even mentioning the names of the idols in their country, and no one will worship them anymore. I will also drive away from the land all the people who falsely claim that they are prophets; I will also drive away the evil spirit that leads them to tell the people false messages from me. ³If someone continues to prophesy falsely, his own parents, even though he is

their own son, will say to him, 'You have told lies saying that Yahweh gave those messages to you, so you must die.' Then they will stab him and kill him.

⁴At that time, the false prophets will be ashamed to announce that he has received any vision at all. They will no longer put on cloaks made with animal hair that prophets normally wear, because they will want the people to think that they were never really prophets at all. ⁵So each of them will say, 'I am not really a prophet; I am a farmer, and I have been a farmer on my land ever since I was a boy!' ⁶But others will see scars on their bodies and think that they cut themselves in order to please idols while they were worshiping them. So they will ask, 'Why do you have those scars?' And they will tell a lie: 'I was injured in a quarrel at my friend's house.'"

⁷Yahweh, the Commander of angel armies, says,

"Someone must attack and kill the one who is like a shepherd working for me,
the man who is my close companion.

You with the sword! When you kill my shepherd, my people will run away like sheep.

And I myself will attack my ordinary people, those who are like little sheep." ⁸Yahweh also says, "Two-thirds of the people in Judah will die; Only one-third of the people in Judah will remain alive. ⁹I will test the ones that remain alive by causing them to experience great difficulties, to find out if they will continue to worship me. I will purify them as someone purifies gold or silver by putting it into a very hot fire. Then my people will call to me for help, and I will answer them. I will tell them that they are my people, and they will say that I, Yahweh, am the God they worship and obey.

Chapter 14

¹Listen! It will soon be the time when Yahweh will judge everyone. At that time, you, the people of Jerusalem, will watch your enemies divide what you owned among themselves.

²Yes, Yahweh says that he will cause the armies of many nations to attack Jerusalem. They will capture the city, take all the valuable things from your houses, and rape the women. They will take half of the people to other countries, but they will allow the other people to remain in the city.

³But then Yahweh will attack those nations; he will fight as he fought at other times in battle. ⁴On that day, he will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives will split into two parts, with a large valley between the parts. Half of the mount will move toward the north, and half will move toward the south. ⁵You people of Jerusalem will flee through that valley which extends to the other side of the mount, all the way to the village of Azel. It will be just as when people fled when there was an earthquake when Uzziah was king. Then Yahweh my God will come, and his own angels will be with him.

⁶At that time, there will be no light from the sun, but it will not be cold or frosty. ⁷Only Yahweh knows when this will happen. There will be no daytime or nighttime, because it will be light all the time, even in the evening.

⁸At that time, water will flow from Jerusalem. One stream will flow toward the east to the Dead Sea. The other stream will flow toward the west to the Mediterranean Sea. The water will flow all the time, even during the hot season as well as in the cold season.

⁹After that time, Yahweh will be the king who rules the entire world. Everyone will know that Yahweh, and only Yahweh, is the true God.

¹⁰At that time, all the land in Judah will be flat, like the plain along the Jordan, from the town of Geba in the north to the town of Rimmon far to the south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will remain high up, as it has always been. The city will extend northeast from the Benjamin Gate and the Corner Gate, which was the old gate, and to the Tower of

Hananel, and then extending to the king's winepresses to the southwest. ¹¹Many people will live there, and God will never again threaten the city with destruction. It will be a completely safe city to live in.

¹²But Yahweh will bring a severe disease on the people groups that attacked Jerusalem. Their flesh will rot while they are still standing up. Their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongues will rot in their mouths. ¹³At that time, Yahweh will cause them to panic. They will grab hold of each other and attack each other. ¹⁴Even the people who live in other places in Judah will attack Jerusalem. They will collect the valuable things, the plunder, from the surrounding armies of the nations—a lot of gold and silver and clothes. ¹⁵The same plague that will afflict the people of other nations will afflict the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and all the other work animals in their camps.

¹⁶The people of other nations who previously came to fight against Jerusalem, all those who are still alive, will return to Jerusalem every year to worship the King, Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁷If there are people in those nations who do not go to Jerusalem to worship there, rain will not fall on their land. ¹⁸If the people of Egypt do not go to Jerusalem, they will not have any rain. And Yahweh will cause them to suffer the same plague that afflicted the people of other nations that do not celebrate the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁹That is how Yahweh will punish the people of Egypt and the people of any other nation who do not go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

²⁰At that time, the words "Dedicated to Yahweh" will be written on the bells that are fastened to the horses. The cooking pots in the courtyard of the temple will belong to Yahweh, like the bowls that are in front of the altar.

²¹Every pot in Jerusalem and everywhere else in Judah will be dedicated to Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies. So everyone who offers sacrifices there in Jerusalem will be able to take some of the meat that has been brought for sacrifices and cook it in their own pots. And at that time, people will no longer buy or sell things in the courtyard of the temple of Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies.

Malachi

Chapter 1

¹This is a message that Yahweh gave to Malachi for the Israelites.

²⁻³Yahweh says, "I have loved you." But I, Malachi, hear you people reply, "How have you shown us that you love us?"

Yahweh replies,

"Is it not true that Esau and Jacob were brothers? Yet I have a covenant with Jacob and his descendants, but I have no covenant with Esau and his descendants. I caused Esau's region to be abandoned, a place where wild dogs live."

⁴The descendants of Esau who now live in Edom may say,

"Yes, God has demolished our cities, but we will rebuild houses in the ruins."

But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, replies,

"They may build houses again, but I will demolish them again. Their country will be called 'The land where wicked people live,' and their people will be called 'The people with whom Yahweh is angry forever.'"

⁵When you Israelite people yourselves see what Yahweh will do to them, you will say, "It is evident that Yahweh is very powerful even in foreign lands!"

⁶But the Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people,

"Boys honor their fathers, and servants respect their masters. So, if I am like your father and your master, why do you not honor me? Why do you not obey me?"

And Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has something to say to you priests:

"You show no respect for me! But you priests ask,

'How have shown no respect for you?'

⁷I answer: Instead of honoring me, you have disgraced me by offering sacrifices on my altar that are unworthy of me, sacrifices that I would never accept. Then you dare to ask,

'What sacrifices have we given that are unworthy of you?'

I answer: You think that it does not matter if you do not honor my altar.

⁸You offer for sacrifices animals that are blind. Is that not wrong? You offer animals that are sick or lame. Do you really think I would accept such gifts? You would not dare to offer such gifts to your own governor! You know that he would not take them. You know that he would be displeased with you and would not welcome you!"

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says!

⁹I, Malachi, see you continually go through the motions of asking God to help us. But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says,

"If you bring to me sacrifices that are not acceptable to me, why should I help you?"

¹⁰Yahweh also says,

"I wish that one of you would shut the gates of the temple courtyard, in order that no one could offer those worthless sacrifices. I am not pleased with you, and I will not accept the offerings that you bring to me."

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says. ¹¹He also says,

"People of other nations from east to west will indeed honor me. They will burn incense to honor me, and they will bring right offerings, offerings that I will accept. This will happen because people in all the nations will praise and honor me.

¹²But you priests—you priests act in a way that shows me no honor at all. You say,

'It is all right if people disgrace the altar by bringing sacrifices that he will not accept.'

¹³You also say,

'We are tired of burning all these sacrifices on the altar.'

You turn up your noses at doing this. You bring sheep or goats that wild animals have attacked and torn in two. You also bring animals that are sick or that cannot walk. You cannot really think that I should accept these from you, can you?"

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁴Yahweh also says,

"I will curse anyone who tries to cheat me by swearing that he will bring to me a perfect animal from his herd, and who then brings me one that has defects. If anyone does that, I will punish him, because I am a great king, and people of the other nations honor me, but you do not!"

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

Chapter 2

¹You priests, I will say something to warn you. ²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:

"Pay attention to what I am saying, and then decide to honor me. If you do not do that, I will curse you, and I will curse the things that I have done for you to help you. And I have already cursed them, because you have not honored me. ³I will punish your descendants, and it will be as though I had splattered on your faces the dung from the animals that you have sacrificed, and I will make others come and throw you away with that dung.

⁴When that happens, you will know that I warned you like this, in order that you descendants of Levi will obey my covenant with the priests."

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is saying to you. ⁵He also says,

"I made my covenant with your ancestor Levi because I wanted the priests to live prosperously and peacefully. And that is what I enabled them to do. I required that they greatly respect me and honor me, and they did so. ⁶They taught the people what was true and right; they did not tell lies. They worked for me peacefully and loyally, and they helped many people to stop sinning.

⁷What priests say should enable people to continue to learn the truth from generation to generation. They should be certain that the priests will teach them correction, because they must be true messengers from me, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

⁸But, you priests do not act in that way any more. Instead, what you have taught people has caused many of them to sin. You have rejected the covenant that I made with the descendants of Levi long ago. ⁹Therefore I have caused all the people to despise you, and I have caused them to shame you, for you have not obeyed me. Instead, you teach people different things, depending on how important they are."

¹⁰Now I, Malachi, will warn you about something else. It is certain that we Israelites are a people group only because God has created us as a people group. But we lie to each other and harm each other; in this way we disgrace the covenant that Yahweh made with our ancestors.

¹¹You people of Judah have been unfaithful toward Yahweh. You have done disgusting things in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel. You Israelite men have defiled the temple that Yahweh loves. You have done that by marrying foreign women, women who worship idols. ¹²I wish that Yahweh would drive away from Israel absolutely every man who has done that, along with his descendants—even if they bring offerings to Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

¹³This is another thing that you do: You come and weep in front of Yahweh's altar, covering it with your tears. You wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings. ¹⁴You cry out, saying "Why does Yahweh not like our offerings?" The answer is that Yahweh heard that each of you men solemnly promised to be faithful to your wives when you were young. But you men have not done what you promised; you have sent them away, the ones with whom you made that covenant, so you could marry foreign women.

¹⁵Indeed, Yahweh made you one with your wife, and he gave you some of his spirit. He did this because he wanted you to have children who would honor him. So you must be careful not to let other women attract you. Let none of you be faithless to the woman whom you married when you were young.

¹⁶Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, says, "I hate divorce!" So if you men divorce your wives, you are overwhelming them by acting cruelly toward them. So be sure that you are not disloyal to your wives. That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁷You have made Yahweh lose his patience with you by saying all those disgusting things. But you dare to ask, "How have we made him impatient?"

The answer is that you have said that Yahweh is pleased with all those who do what is evil, that he actually views them as good. And you have also made him impatient by always saying, "Why does God not act justly toward us?"

Chapter 3

¹Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:

"Look, I will soon send a messenger to you, who will get you ready to welcome me. I, the Lord, whom you say you desire to come, will appear suddenly in my temple. A messenger will come, whom Yahweh had promised in the covenant that you say you take pleasure in. I myself am coming." This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

²And none of you will be able to stop Yahweh from judging you. For he will declare no one innocent when he comes. He will act like a fire that burns hot enough to refine precious metals. He will act as the strong soap that laundrymen use to clean clothing. ³Yahweh will judge you; he will be like a silversmith who sits down and makes his silver pure, free from all impurities. Yahweh will forgive you and make all of you priests and Levite temple workers not want to sin any longer. He will make you like pure gold or silver. Then he will accept your offerings that you bring to him, because you will be righteous."

⁴When that happens, Yahweh will again accept the offerings that the people of Jerusalem and Judah bring to him, as he did previously.

⁵This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"At that time, I will come to you to judge you. I will quickly testify against all those who practice sorcery, against those who mistreat helpless widows and orphans, against those who do not treat the foreigners among you justly, and against those who refuse to honor me."

⁶I am Yahweh, and I never change. That is why I have not yet gotten rid of you, although you deceive people like your ancestor Jacob did. ⁷Ever since the time when your ancestors were alive, you have ignored my commands and refused to obey them. Now return to me; if you do so, I will return to you. That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say. But you ask,

"We have never gone away from you, so how can we return to you?"

⁸I reply: People should certainly not cheat God; but you people have cheated me! You ask,

"In what way did we cheat you?"

I reply: You have cheated me by not bringing to me each year the tithes and other offerings that I have required you to give me. ⁹I have cursed everything that you do, because all you people in this country have been cheating me. ¹⁰Now bring all the tithes to the storerooms of the temple, in order that there may be enough food for the people who serve me there. If you do that, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, promise that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out from them blessings on you. If you bring your tithes to the temple, the blessings will be very great, with the result that you will not have enough space to store all of them. So test me to see if I am telling the truth. ¹¹You will have abundant crops to harvest, because I will protect them in order that locusts do not harm them. Your grapes will not fall from the vines before they are ripe. ¹²When that happens, the people of all nations will say that I have truly helped you, because your country will be delightful. That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say."

¹³"I, Yahweh, have something else to say to you. You have said terrible things about me.

But you reply,

"What terrible things have we said about you?"

¹⁴I reply: You have said that it is useless for you to worship me. You say that you have gained nothing by obeying my commands. You say that you have gained nothing by being sorry for your sins. ¹⁵You have also decided that from now on, you will say that I like to help arrogant people. You think that it is those who do evil who become rich. You say they dare me to punish them because they think I never will."

¹⁶After the people heard these messages that I brought them from Yahweh, the people who honored Yahweh discussed these things with each other. And Yahweh listened to their conversations. While he was watching, they wrote on a scroll the things that would remind them about what they promised, and they wrote on that scroll the names of those who honored Yahweh.

¹⁷Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this about those people:

"They will be my people. On the day that I punish the wicked people among you, I will not punish them. I will be just like a father who does not punish his son who obeys him. ¹⁸When that happens, you will again see that the manner in which I treat righteous people is different from the manner in which I treat wicked people. You will see that the manner in which I act toward those who worship me is different from the manner in which I act toward those who do not."

Chapter 4

¹This is also what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: "There will be a time when I will judge and punish all the proud people and evildoers in Israel. When that happens, it will be like a day that they burn the useless remains of crops in the fields. Those people will burn up completely—as roots and branches and everything else on

a tree burns completely in a very hot fire. ²But for you who honor me, I, who always act righteously, will come to you and heal you, as the sun rises in the morning. You will be as happy as young calves when they leave their stalls to play in the fields. ³On the day when I judge the wicked, you will celebrate. It will be as if you had walked all over them." This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, promises.

⁴Be sure to obey the laws that I commanded Moses, who served me well, to give you. Obey all the commandments and decrees that I gave him on Mount Sinai, for all you people of Israel to obey.

⁵Listen to this: One day I will send to you the prophet Elijah. He will arrive before the great and dreadful day when I, Yahweh, will judge everyone and punish those who deserve punishment. ⁶Because of what Elijah will preach, parents and their children join together in loving each other again. If that does not happen, I will come and destroy your country."

Matthew

Chapter 1

¹This is the record of the people from whom Jesus the Messiah descended. He is the descendant of King David and the descendant of Abraham. ²There were 14 generations from Abraham to King David: Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and of his brothers. ³Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, and their mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. ⁴Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

⁵Salmon and his wife Rahab were the parents of Boaz. Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed's mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse. ⁶Jesse was the father of King David. There were 14 generations from David until the time when the people were taken to Babylon. David was the father of Solomon; Solomon's mother was the wife of Uriah. ⁷Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa.

⁸Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was an ancestor of Uzziah. ⁹Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah. ¹¹Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and Jechoniah's brothers. They lived at the time when the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylonia.

¹²After the Babylonians exiled the Israelites to Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was an ancestor of Zerubbabel. ¹³Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. ¹⁴Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud. ¹⁵Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. ¹⁶Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joseph was Mary's husband, and Mary was Jesus' mother. Jesus is the one who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷The list of Jesus' ancestors is as follows: There were 14 of them from the time when Abraham lived to the time when King David lived. There were another 14 from the time when David lived until the time when the Israelites went away to Babylonia, and yet another 14 from then until the time when the Messiah was born.

¹⁸This is the account of what happened just before Jesus the Messiah was born. Mary, his mother, had promised to marry Joseph. Before they lived together as husband and wife, they found out that she was carrying a child. This child was given to her by Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Now Joseph was a man who obeyed God's commands. When he found out that she was carrying a child in her womb, he decided not to marry her. But he did not want to shame her in front of other people, so he thought about doing this secretly. ²⁰After Joseph had been thinking about this for a while, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said to him, "Joseph, King David's descendant, do not be afraid to marry Mary. For the child which she is carrying was given to her by the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son. You shall name him 'Jesus,' for he will save God's people from their sins." ²²All of these things happened to prove true what the Lord told the prophet Isaiah to write a long time ago. Isaiah wrote, ²³"Listen, a virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son.

They will call him Immanuel"—

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴After Joseph got up from sleep, he did what the Lord's angel had commanded him to do. The angel commanded him to begin to live with Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sex with her until she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Chapter 2

¹Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judea. During that time, King Herod the Great ruled there. Some time after Jesus was born, some men from the east who studied the stars came to the city of Jerusalem. ²They were asking people, "Where is the one whom God appointed to be the king over the Jews from the time of his birth? We have seen a star in the east, which was the sign that he has been born, so we have come to worship him."

³When King Herod the Great heard about what these men were asking, he became very troubled. Many of the people in Jerusalem also became troubled. ⁴Then King Herod called together all the chief priests and teachers of the Jewish laws. He asked them where the prophets had predicted that the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, "He will be born in the town of Bethlehem, here in the region of Judea. We know this because the prophet Micah wrote long ago, ⁶'You who live in Bethlehem in the land of Judah, your town is certainly very important. This is because a man from your town will become a leader. He will guide my people who live in Israel like a shepherd.'"

⁷Then King Herod secretly brought those men who studied the stars to himself. He asked them exactly when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he said to them, "Go out from here to Bethlehem and search everywhere to find where the child is. When you have found him, come back and tell me where he is so that I myself can go there and worship him too."

⁹After the men heard the king's request, they went toward the town of Bethlehem. The star which appeared to them in the east appeared again and led them to the place where the child was. Then, the star remained above that place. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly. ¹¹After they entered the house where the star led them, they saw the child and his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they took out gold, frankincense, and myrrh gifts and give them to him. ¹²After they left the place where the child was, God warned them in a dream not to return to King Herod. So they left to go back to their country, traveling back on a different road than the one on which they came.

¹³After the men who studied the stars left Bethlehem, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee into the country of Egypt. Stay there until I tell you that you should return, because King Herod is about to send soldiers to look for the child so that they can kill him." ¹⁴So Joseph woke up that night after having the dream. He took the child and Mary the child's mother, and they fled into Egypt. ¹⁵Joseph, Mary, and Jesus stayed there until King Herod died. Then they left Egypt and returned to Judah. In this way, what God had told the prophet Hosea to write proved true,

"I have brought my son out of Egypt."

¹⁶Before King Herod died, he realized that the men who study the stars had tricked him, and he became furious. Because he thought that Jesus was still near Bethlehem, Herod sent soldiers there to kill all the boy babies two years old and younger. Herod calculated how old the baby was, according to what the men who studied the stars told him about when the star first appeared. ¹⁷When Herod did this, what the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago proved true, when he wrote about Bethlehem near the town of Ramah:

¹⁸"Women in Ramah were weeping and wailing loudly.

The descendants of Rachel were weeping because of what happened to their children.

People tried to comfort them, but they were not able to, because all their children were dead."

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel that the Lord had sent appeared to Joseph in a dream while they were in Egypt. He said to Joseph, ²⁰"Get up and take the child and his mother and return to the country of Israel to live, because the people who were trying to kill the child have died." ²¹So Joseph took the child and his mother, and they returned to Israel.

²²But when Joseph heard that Archelaus now ruled in the region of Judea instead of his father, King Herod the Great, he was afraid to go there. So God instructed Joseph in a dream to go to the district of Galilee instead. ²³They went to live in the town of Nazareth. The result was that what the prophets had said long ago proved true: "People will say that he is from Nazareth."

Chapter 3

¹When Jesus was an adult, John, whom the people called the Baptizer, went to a desolate place in the region of Judea. To the people who came there he was preaching this message: ²"Cease from your evil ways! For God wants you to become of his people over whom he will rule from heaven" ³John the Baptizer is the one about whom God talked through the prophet Isaiah when he wrote,

"He will be a voice calling out in the desolate place to anyone who hears him, saying,

'Make yourselves ready to welcome the Lord. Get everything organized for his coming!'"

⁴John wore rough clothes made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. His food was grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. ⁵People who lived in the city of Jerusalem, people who lived in the region of Judea, and many others who lived near the Jordan River came to John to hear him preach. ⁶After they heard his message, they were openly sorry for their sins to God, and then John baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷But John saw that many Pharisees and Sadducees were coming in order for John to baptize them. He said to them, "You people are like poisonous snakes! Do not think that you can escape from God's wrath if you do not genuinely ask for forgiveness! ⁸If you are truly sorry for your sin, you must show this by doing good things. ⁹Do not say to yourselves, 'Since we are descendants of our ancestor Abraham, God will not punish us even though we have sinned.' No! I tell you that he does not need you! For he can just as easily make descendants of Abraham out of these rocks! ¹⁰God is ready right now to punish you, just like a man who is ready to chop away the roots of a plant which is not producing what it is supposed to. He cuts it down and throws it into the fire.

¹¹I am baptizing you with water in the Jordan River because you were sorry for your sins. Soon someone else will come who is much greater than I am. He is so great that I am not even worthy to carry his sandals.

He will baptize some of you in the Holy Spirit. Others of you he will baptize in the fire of judgement. ¹²He is like a farmer who is holding his winnowing fork, ready to separate edible parts of the wheat plant from the inedible parts of the wheat plant. He is ready to clear out all the inedible parts from where he prepares the wheat. He will put his wheat into his storehouse, but he will burn the inedible parts in a fire that never goes out. {Similarly, God will bring to himself those who are pleasing to him and will punish those who are displeasing to him.}"

¹³During that time, Jesus went from the region of Galilee to the Jordan River, where John was. He did this so John could baptize him. ¹⁴When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John refused. He said, "I need you to baptize me! {For you are much greater than I am!}" ¹⁵But Jesus said to him, "Baptize me now, because in this way we two will do everything that God requires." Then John agreed to baptize him.

¹⁶As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven open. The Spirit of God descended {from heaven} like a dove would, and it landed upon him. ¹⁷Then God spoke from heaven and said, "This is my Son whom I dearly love. I am very pleased with him."

Chapter 4

¹Then God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. {He did this in order for} the devil to tempt him. ²After he had not eaten food for 40 days, he was hungry. ³Satan, the one who was tempting Jesus, came to him and said, "If you are really the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread {so that you might eat}!" ⁴But Jesus said to him, "No! I will

not do this, because God has said in the Scriptures which Moses wrote, 'A person should not live only by eating food. He should also listen to what God has said'" ⁵Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the holy city. He set him on a high part of the temple ⁶and said to him, "If you are truly the Son of God, cause yourself to fall from here. Surely you will not be hurt, for God has promised in his word,

'God will command his angels to protect you.

They will lift you up in their hands when you are falling,

and they will keep you from hitting your foot on a small stone.'" ⁷But Jesus said, "No! I will not jump down, because God has also said in the Scriptures, 'Do not test what the Lord your God can or cannot do.'" ⁸Then the devil took him on top of a very high mountain. There he showed him all the nations in the world and the magnificent things in those nations. ⁹Then he said to him, "I will let you rule all these nations and give you the magnificent things in them if you bow down and worship me." ¹⁰But Jesus said to him, "No, I will not worship you, Satan. Leave me! God has said in the Scriptures, 'It is the Lord your God alone to whom you must bow down and worship'" ¹¹Then the devil went away, and at that moment, angels came to Jesus and began taking care of him.

¹²While Jesus was in the region of Judea, John the Baptizer's disciples came and told him that King Herod had put John in prison. So Jesus returned to the district of Galilee, to the town of Nazareth. ¹³Then he left Nazareth and went to live in the city of Capernaum. Capernaum is located beside the Sea of Galilee in the region that formerly belonged to the tribes of Israel named Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴He went to live there so that these words that the prophet Isaiah had written long ago might come true:

¹⁵"The regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,

regions by the Sea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River,

Galilee, home of many non-Jewish people

¹⁶

the people there are like people who were at one time sitting in darkness, but now they have seen a great light because they now know God.

And while they lived in a region of people who did not know God, now, like a bright light beginning to shine on them, God has revealed himself to them."

¹⁷At that time, while Jesus was in the city of Capernaum, he began to preach to the people, "Cease from your evil ways, for God's rule has come near to us!"

¹⁸One day while Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon, who was later called Peter, and Andrew, his younger brother. They were casting their fishing net into the water, for they caught fish for work.

¹⁹Then Jesus said to them, "You know how to gather fish, but come with me and I will teach you how to gather people." ²⁰They immediately left the work that they were doing and went with him.

²¹As the three of them walked on from there, Jesus saw two other men, James and John, the younger brother of James. They were in their boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their fishing nets. Jesus told them that they should leave their work and go with him. ²²Immediately they also left their boat and their father and went with Jesus.

²³Jesus led those four men throughout all of the district of Galilee. He was teaching the people in the synagogues. He was preaching the good news about how God is ruling. He was also healing all the people who were sick.

²⁴When people who lived in other parts of the region of Syria heard what he was doing, they brought to him people who suffered from illnesses, people who suffered from many kinds of diseases, people who suffered from severe pains, people who were controlled by demons, people who were epileptics, and people who were paralyzed.

And Jesus healed them. ²⁵Then large crowds started to go with him. They were people from Galilee, from the Ten Towns, from the city of Jerusalem, from other parts of the region of Judea, and from areas east of the Jordan River.

Chapter 5

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a hill. He sat down there, and many of his apprentices gathered around him to hear him teach. ²Then he began to teach them. He said,

³"It is well with those of you who admit to having spiritual need,
for you belong to God's people.

⁴It is well with those of you who mourn because of this sinful world,
for God will comfort you.

⁵It is well with those of you who are humble,
for you will inherit the earth that God will one day restore.

⁶It is well with those of you who desire to live a life pleasing to God as much as someone might need to eat and drink,
for God will satisfy your desires.

⁷It is well with those of you who act mercifully toward others,
for God will act mercifully toward you.

⁸It is well with those who do what God desires them to do,
for they will see God in his presence.

⁹It is well with those of you who act peaceably with all people,
for God will regard you as his own children.

¹⁰It is well with those of you whom people treat poorly because you obey God,
for God is ruling over you from heaven.

¹¹It is well with those of you whom people speak falsely against and persecute because of me. ¹²When that happens, rejoice and be glad, because God will give you a great reward in heaven. Remember, that is how they persecuted the prophets who lived long ago.

¹³Just as salt is good for food, so you shall be good for the world, keeping the people of the world from being more evil. But, as useless salt is thrown out onto the ground, so God will no longer use you if you stop obeying him.

¹⁴What light does for people in the dark, this is what you will do for the world. Just as a city on top of a hill is seen from far away, {so your good deeds in the world will be seen by many people.} ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so it can shine upon everyone in the house. ¹⁶Similarly, you need to do what is right in such a way that other people can see what you do. When they see it, they will praise your Father who is in heaven."

¹⁷"You should not suppose that I have come to you in order to do away with the laws that God gave Moses or what the prophets wrote. Rather, I came in order to cause to happen those things that the prophets foretold would happen. ¹⁸This is a true saying: God will never do away with the smallest part of his laws until the end times, when

he has finished everything he planned to do. ¹⁹Therefore, if one of you decides that any of the commands are not important, and you teach others this, you will be the least important person under God's rule from heaven. But if one of you obeys God's commands and teaches others to obey God as you are obeying him, you will become a great person under God's rule from heaven. ²⁰I tell you that you must obey God's laws better than the teachers of the law and the Pharisees obey them. Otherwise, you will never be one of God's people

²¹"Your religious teachers have told you what God said to our ancestors, 'You shall not kill anyone,' and, 'If you kill anyone, the judge will declare you guilty.' ²²But I tell you that even if you are angry with another one of my followers, God himself will judge you. If you say to another one of my followers, 'You are worthless,' a council will bring you before it for judgement. If you say to someone, 'You are a fool,' God will throw you into the fire in hell. ²³So if, when you take your gift for God to the altar, you remember that you have offended someone, ²⁴leave your gift by the altar. Then, go to the person you have offended, and tell that person that you are sorry for what you have done, and ask that person to forgive you. Then go back and offer your gift to God. ²⁵If a fellow citizen takes you before a judge in order to accuse you of doing something wrong, come to an agreement quickly with that person, while you are still walking with that person to court. Do that while there still is time so that he will not take you to the judge, because the judge might say you are guilty and hand you over to his jailor, and the jailor will put you in prison. ²⁶This is a true saying which I am telling to you. You will never come out of prison until you pay everything which you owe to that person."

²⁷"You have heard from your religious teachers that God said to our ancestors, 'Do not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I tell you that even if a man looks at a woman, desiring to sleep with her, to God he has already committed adultery with her. ²⁹If you sin with your eyes, having looked at certain things, you should destroy both of your eyes. If this would help you to avoid sinning, it would be better to be blind and stop sinning than for God to throw you into hell while you can still see. ³⁰And if one of your hands causes you to sin, cut your hand off and throw it away. If this would help you to avoid sinning, it would be better to lose a part of your body than for God to throw your whole body into hell."

³¹"God has said in the Scriptures, 'If a man divorces his wife, he should write a document on which he states that he is divorcing her.' ³²But I tell you that a man may divorce his wife only if she has committed adultery. If a man divorces his wife for any other reason, he causes her to act adulterously. If she marries someone else, then the man who marries her also commits adultery."

³³"You have heard from your religious teachers that God said to our ancestors, 'You shall fulfill your oaths as you have promised to the Lord.' ³⁴But I tell you that when you make a promise, do not use the name of God or anything to guarantee your promise as the Pharisees do! Do not swear by heaven, for God rules from there. ³⁵And do not swear any oath on the promise that the earth would witness it, for the earth belongs to God. Never swear an oath by the city of Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is the city that belongs to God, our great King.

³⁶Also, do not promise that you will do something by the authority of your own knowledge. For you are not even able to change the color of one hair on your head. ³⁷If you promise something, just say 'Yes, I will do it,' or 'No, I will not do it.' If you say anything more than that, it is Satan, the Evil One, who has suggested that you talk this way."

³⁸"You have heard your religious teachers say that God told our ancestors, 'If a person harms one of your eyes, then someone should harm one of that person's eyes as punishment. And if a person harms one of your teeth, then someone should harm one of that person's teeth as punishment.' ³⁹But I tell you that you should not stop someone who does evil against you. Instead, if someone insults you by striking you on one cheek, turn your other cheek toward that person so he can strike it also. ⁴⁰If someone wants to sue you in a court so that you lose your tunic, let that person also have your outer garment, which is of even more worth to you. ⁴¹And if a Roman soldier forces you to carry his burden for one mile, go with him and carry it for him for two miles. ⁴²If someone asks you for something, give it to him. And if someone asks you to lend him something, do not withhold it from him."

⁴³"You have heard that God said to our ancestors, 'Love your fellow Israelites and hate foreigners, for they are your enemies.' ⁴⁴But I tell to you that you should also love your enemies and pray for those who cause you to suffer. ⁴⁵{You ought to behave this way} in order to be like God, your Father who is in heaven. {For he acts kindly to all people.} This is seen in that he causes the sun to shine equally on wicked people and on good people, and he sends rain both on people who obey his law and on people who do not. ⁴⁶If you love only the people who love you, do not expect God to reward you at all. Even people who do evil things, such as tax collectors, love those who love them. You must act better than they do! ⁴⁷And if you greet only fellow Israelites, you are not acting any better than other people. Even non-Jews, who do not obey God's law, do the same thing! ⁴⁸So you must act without fault, just as God your heavenly Father acts without fault."

Chapter 6

¹"Make certain that when you do good deeds you are not doing them so people will see what you do. If that is your reason for doing what is good, God, your Father who is in heaven, will not give you any reward. ²So whenever you give something to the poor, do not make other people notice it, as by playing a trumpet. That is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the main roads in order that people might praise them. This truth I want you to understand: that is the only reward the hypocrites will receive! ³Instead of doing as they do, when you give something to the poor, do not let other people know what you are doing. ⁴In that way, you will be giving to the poor secretly. As a result, God your Father, who observes what you do while no one else sees it, will reward you.

⁵"Similarly, when you pray, do not do what the hypocrites do. They like to stand in the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to pray in order that other people will see them and think highly of them. This truth I want you to know: that is the only reward they will get. ⁶But as for you, when you pray, go into your private room and close the door in order to pray to God, your Father, whom no one can see. Your Father observes what you do and will reward you. ⁷When you pray, do not repeat words many times as the people who do not know God do when they pray. They think that if they use many words, their gods will hear their requests. ⁸Do not repeat words as those who do not know God, for God your Father knows what you need before you even ask him. ⁹So you ought to pray to God like this:

'God, our Father who is in heaven,

May everyone glorify you.

¹⁰May your kingdom come.

May everything happen on earth as you desire,

just as it happens in heaven.

¹¹Give us each day the food that we need for that day.

¹²Forgive us of our sins against you in the same way that we forgive the people who have sinned against us.

¹³Do not bring us into situations where we will sin,

but rescue us when Satan tries to harm us.'

¹⁴If you forgive the people who sin against you, God, your Father who is in heaven, will forgive your sins. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive other people for their sins against you, neither will your Father forgive your sins against him.

¹⁶When you keep from eating food in order to please God, do not look sad as the hypocrites look. They make their faces appear sad in order that people will see that they are not eating food. This truth I want you to know: that is the only reward they will get. ¹⁷Instead, each of you, when you keep from eating food to please God, anoint yourselves and wash your face as usual. ¹⁸Do this in order that other people will not notice that you are fasting. But

God, your Father, whom no one can see, will observe that you are not eating food. He sees you even though no one else sees you, and he will reward you because of this.

¹⁹Do not accumulate large quantities of money and material goods for yourselves on this earth. For the earth is where everything perishes—where moths ruin clothing, rust destroys metals, and thieves break into people's houses and steal what belongs to them. ²⁰Instead, do deeds that will please God so that you store up treasures in heaven. Nothing perishes in heaven. In heaven no moths can ruin clothing, there is no rust to destroy metal, and there are no thieves who break in and steal things. ²¹Remember that whatever is most important to you, that is what you will desire the most.

²²"Your eyes are like a lamp for your body, {because they enable you to see things}. So if your eyes are healthy, you will see things clearly. Similarly, if you are generous, then God will tell you all that he wants you to know. ²³But if your eyes are bad, you are not able to see things well. Similarly, if you continue to love your treasure in this world, you will take part in much spiritual darkness."

²⁴"No one is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. Similarly, you cannot worship God and money at the same time."

²⁵That is why I tell you that you should not worry about things that you need in order to live. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat and enough things to drink, or enough clothes to wear. Life is much more than just about these things. ²⁶Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops from seeds nor gather produce into barns. They always have food to eat, because God, your Father who is in heaven, provides food for them. You can be assured that God will supply what you need, for you are certainly worth a lot more than birds! ²⁷None of you can, just by worrying, add any amount of time to your life.

²⁸You should also not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear. Think about the way flowers grow in the fields. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their own clothes. ²⁹But I tell you that even though King Solomon, who lived long ago, wore very beautiful clothes, his clothes were not as beautiful as one of those flowers. ³⁰And if one day the grass is in the field, and the next day people throw them into an oven to burn them, {this shows that} God will surely provide clothes for you. So trust in God, you who have so little faith! ³¹So do not worry and say, 'Will we have anything to eat?' or 'Will we have anything to drink?' or 'Will we have clothes to wear?' ³²Those who do not know God are always worrying about what they will eat, drink, and what they will wear. But God, your Father who is in heaven, knows that you need all those things. ³³Instead, make it the most important thing that you become one of God's people, and that you do what he commands you to do. If you do that, he will give you all the things that you need. ³⁴So do not be worried about what will happen to you tomorrow. For when that day comes, you will have enough to be concerned about."

Chapter 7

¹Do not show how much other people have disobeyed God, unless you would like God to show how much you have disobeyed him. ²For if you call other people sinful, God will show you how you are sinful. Likewise, in whatever way that you treat others, God will treat you yourself in that way. ³{None of you should be concerned about the small faults of another person. You should be concerned about your own serious faults.} Otherwise, that would be like noticing a tiny speck of dirt in the eye of that person while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴You should not say to other people about their minor faults, 'Let me remove the tiny speck of dirt from your eye!' while you still have a wooden plank in your own eye. ⁵If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first {stop committing your own sins. That will be like} removing a large plank from your own eye. Then, as a result, you will have the spiritual insight you need to help others get rid of the {smaller faults that are like} tiny specks of dirt in their eyes.

⁶“Do not share about God with people who have completely refused to hear it. For this is like giving valuable things to dogs, or like throwing pearls in front of a herd of pigs, who will trample them. For these people will reject what you say to them and will instead attack you.

⁷“Ask God for what you need, and he will certainly give it to you. ⁸For if anyone asks God for something they need, he will give it to them.

⁹If your son asked you for bread, you certainly would not give him a stone! ¹⁰Similarly, if your son asked you for a fish, certainly you would not give him a serpent. ¹¹You know how to give good things to your children even though you are evil. So God, your Father who is in heaven, will even more certainly give good things to those who ask him.

¹²So in whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way you should act toward them. For this is what Moses taught in God’s law and what the prophets wrote long ago.

¹³⁻¹⁴“You ought to live with God in Heaven! This is like walking through a narrow gate which is not as easy to walk through. It is also like walking on a narrow path which many people do not find. For there is another way of life, one that most people take, which is like a wide road and a wide gate. This path and this gate lead to living apart from God forever.

¹⁵Watch out for people who come to you and say falsely that they are telling you what God has said. They pretend that they are one of God’s people, but they are really enemies of God’s people. ¹⁶Just as thorn bushes cannot produce grapes and thistles cannot produce figs, so you will recognize that they are not one of God’s people by the way they behave. ¹⁷Likewise, all good fruit trees produce good fruit for eating, but all bad trees produce fruit which you cannot eat. ¹⁸No good fruit tree is able to produce inedible fruit, and no bad tree is able to produce good fruit. ¹⁹Just as every useless tree which produces bad fruit should be chopped down and thrown in a fire to be burned, so God will destroy those who pretend to be his people but are not. ²⁰And just as you can tell if a tree is healthy by the quality of its fruit, so you can tell if someone is one of God’s people by the way they behave.

²¹Even though many people habitually call me Lord, pretending that they are my people, they are not my people, because they do not do what my Father in heaven desires them to do. ²²On the day that God will judge everyone, many people will say to me, ‘Lord, we spoke God’s message by your power! By your power we drove out demons from people! And by your power, we performed many mighty deeds!’ ²³Then I will publicly say to them, ‘I never said that you were one of my people. Go away from me, you who do what is evil!’”

²⁴So then, anyone who hears what I say and obeys me will be like a wise man who built his house on solid ground.

²⁵Even though it rained, and floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it did not fall down, because it had been built on solid ground. ²⁶On the other hand, anyone who hears what I say but does not obey me will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷When the rain fell and floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, it crashed down and broke completely apart because it was built on a weak foundation.”

²⁸When Jesus finished teaching, the crowds who had heard him were amazed by what he taught them. ²⁹He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught.

Chapter 8

¹When Jesus went down from the hillside, large crowds followed him. ²Then a man who had a skin disease came and knelt before him. He said to Jesus, “Lord, please heal me, for I know you are able to heal me if you are willing to.” ³Then Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man. He said to him, “I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!” Immediately Jesus healed the man from his skin disease. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, “Make sure that you do not report about me healing you to anyone. Instead, go to the temple in Jerusalem and show to the priest that you are healed. Then give the offering that Moses commanded so people will see that you are no longer sick.”

⁵When Jesus went to the city of Capernaum, a Roman officer who commanded 100 soldiers came to him. He begged Jesus to help him. ⁶He said to him, "Lord, my servant is lying in bed at home and is paralyzed, and he is suffering much." ⁷Jesus said to him, "I will go to your house and heal him." ⁸But the officer said to him, "My Lord, I am not worthy for you to come into my house. All you must do is speak, and you will heal my servant. ⁹{I know that you can do this} because I myself am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another one, 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled. He said to the crowd that was walking with him, "Listen to this: I have never before found anyone who trusts in me as much this non-Jewish man. Not even in Israel, where I would expect people to believe in me, have I found anyone who trusts so much in me! ¹¹I tell you that many other non-Jewish people will believe in me also. They will come from distant countries, including those far to the east and far to the west, and have eternal life with God, along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the rest of God's people. ¹²But as for the Jewish people, whom God intended to be his people—he will throw many of them into hell, which is an evil place where God does not give any spiritual blessings. There they will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will be in severe pain." ¹³Then Jesus said to the officer, "Go home. What you believed I am able to do will happen." Then the officer went home and found out that his servant had become well at the exact time that Jesus told him that he would heal him.

¹⁴When Jesus and some of his disciples went to the home of Peter, Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law. She was lying on a bed because she was feeling sick due to having a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and immediately she no longer had a fever. Then she got up and served Jesus and the disciples.

¹⁶When it was evening, the crowd brought to Jesus many people whom demons controlled, as well as other people who were sick. He made the demons leave the people just by commanding them to leave, and he healed all the people who were sick. ¹⁷When he did this, he proved true what the prophet Isaiah had written, 'He healed people from their sicknesses, and he cured them from their diseases.'

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he told his disciples to take him by boat to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹As they were walking toward the boat, a man who taught the Jewish laws came to him and said, "Teacher, I will go with you wherever you go." ²⁰Jesus answered him, "Foxes make their homes in holes in the ground, and birds make their homes in nests in the trees, but even though I am the Son of Man, I do not have a home where I can sleep." ²¹Another man who was one of Jesus' apprentices said to him, "Lord, permit me first to go home. After my father dies I will bury him, and then I will come with you." ²²But Jesus said to him, "Come with me now. Let the people who do not love God and do not desire to follow me bury the people who have died."

²³When Jesus got onto the boat, his apprentices followed him. ²⁴Suddenly a strong windstorm came over the Sea of Galilee. Very high waves were splashing into the boat and filling it, but Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke Jesus up and said to him, "Lord, rescue us! We are about to drown!" ²⁶He said to them, "You should not be scared! You do not believe that I can rescue you." Then he got up and told the wind and the waves to stop. Immediately the wind stopped and the water became calm. ²⁷The men were amazed, and they said to each other, "This man is certainly an extraordinary person! He has all things are under his control! He even commands the wind and the waves!"

²⁸When they came to the east side of the lake, they arrived in the region where the Gadarenes lived. Then two men whom demons controlled came out from among the tombs where they were living. Because they were extremely violent and attacked people, no one was brave enough to travel on the road that went by the tombs. ²⁹Suddenly they shouted to Jesus, "Leave us alone, Son of the Most High God! Have you come here to torture us before the time God has appointed to punish us?" ³⁰There was a large herd of pigs grazing not far away. ³¹So the demons begged Jesus and said, "If you are going to send us out of these people, send us into those pigs!" ³²Jesus said to them, "If that is what you want, go!" So the demons left the men and entered the pigs. Suddenly the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the water and drowned. ³³The men who had been tending the pigs became afraid and ran into the town. There, they reported everything that had happened, including what had happened to the two men whom demons had controlled. ³⁴Then many people who lived in that town went out to meet Jesus. When they saw him and the two men whom demons had controlled, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

Chapter 9

¹Jesus and his disciples got into the boat. They sailed over the Sea of Galilee and went to the city of Capernaum, where Jesus was living. ²Some people brought to him a man who was paralyzed and who was lying on a sleeping pad. When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the paralyzed man, he said to him, "Be encouraged! I forgive your sins." ³Some of the men who taught the Jewish laws said to each other, "Only God can forgive sins! This man says that he can forgive sins. He is blaspheming!" ⁴Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said, "You should not think evil thoughts! ⁵You think it would certainly be easier for someone to say to another person 'I have forgiven your sins' {because you cannot see the proof of it happening}. Similarly, you think it would be much more difficult for someone to say to another person '{I have healed you.} Stand up and walk' {because you can see the proof of it happening}. ⁶But I will show you that I, the Son of Man, am able to forgive sins on the earth, {which, according to you, is easier to do}." Then Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Stand up! Take up your sleeping pad and go home!" ⁷The man got up, picked up his sleeping pad, and went home. ⁸When the crowds saw this, they were amazed. They praised God for giving such authority to people.

⁹As Jesus was going away from there, he saw a man named Matthew. He was sitting at a table where he collected taxes for the Roman government. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" So Matthew got up and went with him. ¹⁰Jesus and his apprentices sat down in a house for a meal. While they were eating, many tax collectors and people who did not obey the law of Moses came and ate with them. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw that, they approached Jesus' disciples and said, "It is shameful that your teacher eats and spends time with tax collectors and people who do not know God." ¹²Jesus heard what they said, and he said to them, "In the same way that people who are sick need a doctor and not people who are well, so, people who are spiritually unwell need spiritual care. ¹³You should learn what these words mean that God said: 'I want you to act mercifully to people and not just to offer sacrifices.' I have not come to make people my disciples who think themselves to be righteous. Rather, I have come to make people my disciples who think of themselves as sinners."

¹⁴Then the apprentices of John the Baptizer came to Jesus and asked him, "We and the Pharisees often abstain from food because we want to please God, but your apprentices do not do that. Why do they not abstain from food?" ¹⁵Jesus answered, "When a man is marrying a woman, his friends will certainly not be sad and abstain from food while he is still with them. But some day, the groom will go away from his friends. Then in those days, they will abstain from food and be sad."

¹⁶People do not sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old piece of clothing to mend a hole. If they did that, when they washed the clothing, the patch would shrink and tear the clothing, and the hole would become bigger.

¹⁷Similarly, people do not put new wine into old animal skin bags to store it. If they did, the new wine will burst the skin bags because, being previously stretched, the old bags will not stretch more when the wine ferments and expands. As a result both the wine and the skin bags would be ruined! On the contrary, people must put new, unfermented wine into new, unstretched skin bags!

¹⁸While Jesus was saying those things to the scribes, a leader in the city came and bowed down before him. Then he said, "My daughter has just now died! But if you come and lay your hand on her, she will live again!" ¹⁹So Jesus and his disciples got up, and they went with the man. ²⁰Then a woman who had been suffering constant bleeding for 12 years came near Jesus. She came behind him and touched the edge of his garment. ²¹She was saying to herself, "If I just touch his garment, I will be healed." ²²Then Jesus turned around to see who had touched him, and when he saw the woman, he said to her, "Be encouraged, dear woman. Because you believed that I could heal you, I have healed you." Jesus healed the woman at that very moment.

²³Jesus came to the man's house and saw the flute players playing funeral music; there were also many mourners who were wailing loudly because the girl had died. ²⁴He said to them, "Go away and stop your mourning, for the girl is not dead! She is just sleeping!" But the people laughed at him because they thought that she was dead. ²⁵But

Jesus told them to get out of the house. Then he went into the room where the girl was lying. He took hold of her hand, and she became alive again and got up. ²⁶And the people of that whole region heard about what Jesus did.

²⁷As Jesus went away from there, two blind men followed him. They were shouting, "Have mercy on us and heal us, you Descendant of King David!" ²⁸Jesus went into the house, and then the blind men went in, too. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to heal you?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord!" ²⁹Then he touched their eyes and he said to them, "Because you believe that I can heal your eyes, I am healing them right now!" ³⁰Jesus made them able to see. After this, he told them sternly, "Be sure that you do not tell anybody about me healing your eyes!" ³¹But the two men who had been blind went out and spread the news of what Jesus did to many people in that region.

³²Just when those two men were leaving, some people brought to Jesus a man who was unable to speak, because a demon controlled him. ³³After Jesus had driven out the demon, the man began to speak. The crowd saw this, and the people were astonished. They said, "Never before have we seen anything as marvelous as this happen in Israel!" ³⁴But the Pharisees said, "It is Satan, who rules the demons, who enables this man to drive out demons from people."

³⁵Then Jesus and his disciples went through many of the cities and towns in the region of Galilee. He was teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming the good news about how God will make them his people. He also was healing the people who had various diseases and illnesses. ³⁶When he saw the crowds of people, he pitied them because they were upset and oppressed. They were like sheep that did not have a shepherd {to lead them and take care of them.} ³⁷Then he said to his apprentices, "The people who are ready to receive my message are like a field where the crops are ready to harvest. But there are not many people to tell them my message. ³⁸So pray and ask the Lord, who causes people to be ready to hear the message. Do this in order that he might send many more workers to gather people to hear the message like one gathers crops at the time of the harvest."

Chapter 10

¹Jesus told his 12 apprentices to come to him. Then he gave them the power to drive out evil spirits that controlled people. He also enabled them to heal people who had every kind of sickness. ²Here is a list of the names of the Twelve whom he chose to represent him. They were: Simon, to whom he gave the new name Peter; Andrew, Peter's younger brother; James the son of Zebedee; John, the younger brother of James; ³Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon, the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who was disloyal to Jesus and brought the authorities to where he was so that they could arrest him.

⁵When Jesus was about to send the Twelve to represent him, telling the good news to people in various places, he gave them these instructions: "Do not go where the Gentiles live. Do not go into the towns where the Samaritans live. ⁶Instead, go to the people of Israel; they are like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd. ⁷When you go to them, proclaim to them that they can become God's people, over whom he will rule from heaven. ⁸Heal sick people, cause dead people to become alive, heal people with leprosy and bring them back into society, and cause demons to leave those whom they control. God did not charge you any money for helping you, so you should not charge other people money to help them. ⁹Do not take any money with you as you travel. ¹⁰Neither should you take a bag for what belongs to you. Do not take an extra tunic or sandals in addition to what you are wearing, or a walking stick. Every worker deserves to receive pay from the people for whom he works, so you deserve to receive food from the people to whom you go. ¹¹In any town or village that you enter, find a person who wants you to stay in his home. Stay in that person's home until you decide to leave that place. ¹²When you go into that house, greet the people who live there, {and ask God to bring them peace}. ¹³If the people who live in that house receive you, God will indeed bring them peace. But if they do not receive you, then God will not bring them peace. ¹⁴If the people who live in any house or town do not welcome you or listen to your message, leave that place. As you leave, shake off the dust from your feet {to warn them that God will judge them for not welcoming

you}. ¹⁵For certainly at the time when God judges all people, he will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. But if the people who live in any city or town reject you, God will punish them even more severely.

¹⁶"Take note of what I am about to say: When I send you out to share my message, you will be as defenseless as sheep among people who are as dangerous as wolves. So be as wise as snakes are wise in dangerous situations and be harmless as pigeons are harmless. ¹⁷Be careful around such people, because they will arrest you and take you to the members of the governing councils, who will judge you. They will also whip you in their synagogues.

¹⁸And because you belong to me, they will arrest you and take you before governors and kings in order that they may put you on trial and punish you. But you will testify to those rulers and to other non-Jews about me. ¹⁹When those people arrest you, do not be worried about what you will say to them, because I will tell you the words that you should say at that time. ²⁰It is not that you will decide what to say. Instead, you will say what the Holy Spirit of your heavenly Father tells you to say. ²¹It will be so dangerous for you that a man will have his own brother arrested and have the leaders kill him. Also, fathers will have their own children arrested and have the leaders kill them. Similar to this, children will have their parents arrested and have the leaders kill them. ²²Many people will hate you because you are my disciple. But anyone who continues to be my disciple until they die, those people God will save. ²³When people in one city try to harm you, escape to another city. For it is certain that I, the Son of Man, will certainly return before you have finished going from one town to another town throughout Israel and telling people about me.

²⁴An apprentice is not greater than his teacher, and servants are not superior to their master. ²⁵You do not expect that people will treat a student better than they treat his teacher or that they will treat a servant better than they treat his master. Similarly, because I am your teacher and master, you can expect that people will mistreat you because they have mistreated me. I am like the ruler of a household, and they call me Satan. If they act that poorly toward me, surely they will act poorly towards you."

²⁶"Do not be afraid of those people. For everything which is done in secret God will reveal when he judges the world. ²⁷You should say to many people the message which I have told you privately. Likewise, which I told you quietly you should shout from the places where many people can hear you that. ²⁸Do not be afraid of people who are able to kill your body but are not able to destroy your soul. Instead, fear God, because he is able to destroy both your body and your soul in hell. ²⁹Sparrows have so little value that you can buy two of them for only one small coin. But when any sparrow dies, God, your heavenly Father, knows it, for he knows everything. ³⁰He knows so much about you that he even knows how many hairs you have on your head! ³¹God values you much more than he values many sparrows. So, do not be afraid of people who threaten to kill you! ³²If people are willing to say that they belong to me while standing in front of people who want to harm them, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven that they belong to me. ³³But if they are afraid to say in front of others who want to harm them that they belong to me, I will tell my Father, who is in heaven, that they are not mine."

³⁴"Do not think that I came to earth to cause people to live together in peace. Because I have come, some of those who follow me will die. ³⁵For example, because I have come, some sons will oppose their fathers because the fathers believe in me. Similarly, some daughters will oppose their mothers because they believe in me, as well as some daughters-in-law will oppose their mothers-in-law. ³⁶Because a person belongs to me, sometimes a person's enemies will be members of his own household! ³⁷People who care more for their father or mother than for me do not honor me, and those who care for their son or daughter more than they care for me do not honor me. ³⁸If you are not ready to die because you belong to me, then you are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁹People who deny that they belong to me in order to escape dying will not live with God eternally. But people who are willing to lose their lives because people hate them for belonging to me will live with God eternally."

⁴⁰"From God's perspective, anyone who welcomes you welcomes me. Likewise, from his perspective, anyone who welcomes me welcomes God, who is the one who sent me. ⁴¹To those who welcome someone because they know that person is a prophet, God will give the same reward that he gives to prophets. Likewise, to those who welcome a person because they know that person is righteous, God will give the reward that he gives to righteous people.

⁴²And if a person gives a thirsty person some water because they are one of my apprentices, then God will surely reward them."

Chapter 11

¹When Jesus had finished instructing his 12 apprentices about what they should do, he went to proclaim his message in other towns in that area.

²While John the Baptizer was in prison, he heard what Jesus the Messiah was doing. So he sent some of his apprentices to Jesus ³to ask him, "Are you the Messiah {whom the prophets said} would come, or is someone else coming that we should expect?" ⁴Jesus answered John's disciples, "Go back and report to John what you hear me teaching people and what you see me doing. ⁵I am making blind people to see again, and I am making lame people able to walk. I am healing people who have leprosy and making them able to enter back into the community. I am making deaf people to hear again, and I am making dead people to become alive again. I am telling the poor people God's good news. ⁶Also tell John that I am teaching people that God is pleased with people who do not get offended when they see what I do and hear what I teach."

⁷As John's disciples went away, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people {following him} about John. He said to them, "When you went out into the wilderness {to hear John teach and to have him baptize you}, you certainly were not expecting to see {the kind of person} that is easily influenced by others, like a reed which is blown around in the wind! ⁸What did you expect to see? Surely not a man who was wearing expensive clothes. You know very well that people who wear clothes like that reside in kings' palaces and not in the wilderness. ⁹What did you expect to see? A prophet? Yes, but let me tell you this: John is not just any ordinary prophet, but he is greater than all of the prophets. ¹⁰John the Baptist is the one to whom God was referring when someone wrote in the Scriptures and said, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare people for your coming.'

¹¹What I say to you is true: Of all the people who have ever lived, God considers John the Baptist to be the greatest. At the same time, God considers those that seem unimportant among his people whom he rules to be even more important than John is. ¹²From the time that John the Baptist preached openly in public until now, some violent people have been causing harm to those who are God's people. ¹³Everything that I am saying about John is proven true by the fact that the prophets wrote about it and Moses wrote in the law about it. All of these wrote about John the Baptist before he was alive. ¹⁴Not only that, but if you are willing to try to understand this, I will tell you that John is in fact like the prophet Elijah, who the prophets said would come a second time in the future. ¹⁵Whoever is willing to listen, listen to what I say.

¹⁶Many of you who are alive now are like when children are playing in the marketplace. In this scenario, John the Baptist and I are like some of them who call out to you, other children ¹⁷and say to them, 'We played happy music on the flute for you, but you refused to dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you refused to cry!' ¹⁸I say this because you did not listen to John the Baptist when he came to you. He did not eat good food and did not drink wine like most people do, yet you rejected him and said, 'A demon is controlling him!' ¹⁹I also say this because I, the Son of Man, was not like John when I came. I eat the same food and drink wine as other people do. But you similarly reject me and say, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he is friends with tax collectors and those who do not obey the law of Moses!' But God shows his wisdom through how people's lives are changed by my ministry and John's ministry."

²⁰In the towns where Jesus had performed many of his miracles, the people there still refused to repent of their evil deeds. So he began to scold them saying, ²¹"You people who live in the city of Chorazin and you in the city of Bethsaida, God will certainly punish you because of your great evil! For I did many miracles in your cities, but you did not stop sinning. If I had done these miracles in the evil cities of Tyre and Sidon, which existed a long time ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning. They would have put on rough, scratchy mourning clothes and sat in the cold ashes of their fires, as is the custom of people who are sorry for their evil deeds. ²²Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. But he will punish you even more severely on the final day, when he judges all people. ²³I also have something to say to you people who live in the city of Capernaum. Do you think that others will praise you so much that you will go right up to heaven?

That will not happen! On the contrary, you will go down to where God punishes people after they die! If I had done these same miracles even among the people of Sodom long ago, they would have stopped sinning and their city would have been here even today. ²⁴Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom. But he will punish you people of Capernaum even more severely on the final day, when he judges all people."

²⁵At that time Jesus prayed, "My Father who rules over everything in heaven and on the earth, I thank you that you have prevented people who think that they are wise and well-educated from knowing these things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth just as little children believe what an older person tells them.

²⁶Yes, Father, you have done that because it seemed good to you to do so."

²⁷Then Jesus said to the crowd, "God, my Father, has revealed to me everything about himself. Only my Father knows who I truly am. Furthermore, only I, his Son, and those to whom I reveal him, know the Father. ²⁸Come to me, all you people who are very tired of trying to obey all the {man-made} laws your leaders say you should obey. I will let you stop {trying to do everything perfectly}. ²⁹Let me help you carry your heavy burden like two beasts of burden would pull a heavy load. For I feel compassion towards you. If you let me help you, and you learn from me, you will have spiritual peace within yourselves. ³⁰For I will carry most of the heavy burden for you, and it will be much easier for you."

Chapter 12

¹Soon after that, Jesus and his apprentices were walking through grain fields on the Sabbath. His apprentices were hungry, so they began to pick grain and eat it. ²Some Pharisees saw the apprentices picking grain, so they said to Jesus, "Look! Your apprentices are doing work on the Jewish day of rest. The law of Moses does not allow that!" ³But Jesus answered, "Certainly you have read in the scriptures what our ancestor King David did when he and the men with him were hungry! ⁴King David entered the sacred tent where they worshiped God and ate the bread that had been on display before God. According to the law of Moses, only priests were permitted to eat that bread. But David and the men who were with him ate it. ⁵Likewise, certainly you have read what Moses wrote when he said that the priests, when they work in the temple on the Jewish day of rest, which is not lawful, they are not guilty of breaking the law. ⁶But let me tell you this: I have come to you, and I am much greater than the temple. ⁷You should understand these words which God spoke through a prophet in the scriptures: 'I want you to act mercifully toward people. I do not want you to just offer sacrifices.' If you had understood what that means, you would not have condemned my disciples, who have done nothing wrong by eating this grain. ⁸I, the Son of Man have the authority to tell people what they are allowed to do on the Jewish day of rest."

⁹After Jesus left there that day, he went into a Jewish meeting place. ¹⁰In that place he saw a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees continued to ask Jesus about the Sabbath, "Does God permit us to heal people on the Jewish day of rest?" They asked Jesus this question in order that they might accuse him of doing something wrong. ¹¹He replied to them, "Suppose that one of you had a single sheep, and it fell into a deep hole on the Jewish day of rest. You would certainly take it out of the hole! ¹²But a person is much more valuable than a sheep. So it is certainly right for us to heal a person on the Jewish day of rest." ¹³Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" The man stretched out his withered hand, and Jesus made it well like the other hand. ¹⁴Then the Pharisees left the synagogue and began to plan together how they could kill Jesus.

¹⁵Jesus knew that the Pharisees were plotting to kill him, so he went away from there, and many of his disciples followed him. He healed many of those who were following him from their illnesses. ¹⁶But he told them sternly that they should not tell other people about him. ¹⁷By doing this he fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago. He wrote,

¹⁸"Here is my servant whom I have chosen,

the one whom I love and who does what pleases me.

I will put my Spirit within him,

and he will proclaim to the non-Jews that God is going to judge them justly.

¹⁹He will not quarrel with people, nor will he shout loudly.

And he will not yell in the streets for people to hear him.

²⁰will not judge people harshly who have weak faith,

and people who have very little faith he will help them to continue to believe in him.

He will help these people to have faith until he declares them innocent and allows them to live with him forever.

²¹So the non-Jewish people will confidently trust in him."

²²One day some men brought to Jesus a man who was blind and unable to speak because he had a demon. Jesus drove out the demon and healed him. Then the man began to talk and was able to see. ²³All the crowds who saw what Jesus did marveled. They began asking each other, "Could this man be the Messiah, the descendant of King David, whom we have been expecting?" ²⁴When the Pharisees heard that the people were saying Jesus is the Son of David, they said, "It is not God, but Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to drive demons from people!" ²⁵But Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will divide their nation and destroy it fighting against each other. If people who live in the same city or house fight each other, they will certainly not remain united. ²⁶Thus, if Satan were driving out his own demons, he would be fighting against himself. He would not be able to continue to rule over his demons and have control over people! ²⁷Furthermore, if it is true that Satan enables me to drive out demons, then it is also true that your disciples who drive them out do so by Satan's power. So they will judge you for saying that Satan's power was behind their work. ²⁸But it is God's Spirit who enables me to drive out demons, which proves that God is causing people to become his people to rule over.

²⁹I will tell you why I am able to drive out demons. A person cannot drive out all of Satan's demons unless Satan is first restrained. But if he is restrained, then that person will be able to drive Satan's demons out from people.

³⁰You must support me {when I do miracles}. Otherwise, you are against what I am doing. Similarly, you must help me gather people to hear my message as one gathers sheep from the field. Otherwise, you are only causing people to go away from me.

³¹Therefore, this I say to you. God will forgive every sin which man commits except the sin which you are committing when you say that it is Satan empowering my work when it is really God's Holy Spirit. ³²For God is willing to forgive people who criticize me, the Son of Man. But I warn you that he will not forgive now or in eternity those who say such evil things about what the Holy Spirit does."

³³In the same way that you determine that a tree is healthy by looking at whether it bears good fruit or not. So, you can tell whether I am good or evil by whether I do good or bad things. ³⁴You who are like snakes in how you harm people are certainly not able to speak good things. For you are evil. What a person says shows whether the person is truly a good person or a bad person. ³⁵In the same way that a good person might use his money to give other people good things, a good person speaks to people kindly because he has good intentions. But in the same way that an evil person might use his money for bad things, an evil person speaks to people harmfully because he has evil intentions. ³⁶I tell you that on the day when God will judge people, he will make people aware of every single harmful word they have spoken, and he will judge them because of these words. ³⁷God will either declare that you are righteous based on the good words that you have spoken, or he will condemn you based on the evil words that you have spoken."

³⁸Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws said to Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see you do something that will convince us that God sent you." ³⁹Then Jesus replied to them, "You people have already seen me perform miracles, but you still do not believe God sent me. This is because you are evil, and you do not faithfully worship God! You desire to see proof that I am from God, but God will prove to you that I am from him in only one way. This will be like what happened to Jonah the prophet in the scriptures. ⁴⁰Jonah was in the stomach of

a huge fish for three entire days before God caused the fish to spit him out. Similarly, for three entire days I, the Son of Man, will be buried in the ground, and then God will cause me to live again. ⁴¹When God judges everyone, he will resurrect the people who lived in the city of Nineveh long ago alongside of you people, and they will condemn you. They will be able to condemn you because they repented when the prophet Jonah told them to repent. But when I came to you and told you to repent, you did not repent. And I am certainly greater than Jonah!

⁴²The Queen from the country of Sheba, which is south of Israel, who lived long ago, came from far away in order to listen to King Solomon teach many wise things. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Solomon was, but you have not listened to me. So when God judges everyone, God will resurrect the Queen of Sheba alongside of you and she will condemn you."

⁴³"Listen to this parable: An evil spirit might leave someone and wander around in desolate areas looking for someone else to live in. If it does not find anyone there, ⁴⁴it says to itself, 'I will return to the person in whom I used to live and have control.' So he goes back and finds that the Spirit of God is not in control of that person's life. The person's life is like a house that has been swept clean and everything put in order, but it is empty with no one living in it. ⁴⁵Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil, and they all enter that person and begin living there. So although that person's condition was bad before, it becomes much worse. That is what you wicked people who have heard me teach will experience."

⁴⁶While Jesus was still speaking to the crowd, his mother and his younger brothers arrived. They stood outside the house, wanting to speak with him. ⁴⁷Someone said to him, "Your mother and your younger brothers are standing outside the house wanting to talk to you." ⁴⁸Then Jesus responded to the person who said this to him, "I will tell you who are really my mother and brothers." ⁴⁹He then pointed toward his apprentices and said, "These apprentices are like my mother and my brothers to me. ⁵⁰Those who do what God my Father who is in heaven wants are to me like my brother, my sister, or my mother."

Chapter 13

¹That same day, Jesus, along with the disciples, left the house where he was teaching and went to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sat down there. ²After arriving there, a large crowd came to him. So Jesus got into a boat to sit {and teach}, and all of the people stood on the beach {to listen to him}. ³Jesus taught them using many parables. He said, "Listen carefully to what I say! A man went out to his field to sow seeds. ⁴As he was scattering the seeds over the soil, some of the seeds fell along the edge of the path. Then, some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵Other seeds fell on ground in a place where there was not much soil on top of rocks. The sun quickly warmed the shallow soil, so the seeds sprouted very quickly. ⁶But when the day got very hot because the sun was at its highest point in the sky, the plants were scorched. Then, because they did not have deep roots {because of the shallow soil}, they dried up. ⁷Other seeds fell on ground that had thorny weeds. The thorny weeds grew much quicker than the plants, so they crowded out the plants. ⁸Still other seeds fell on good soil. These plants grew and produced a lot of grain. Some plants produced 100 times as many seeds as were planted. Some plants produced 60 times as much. Some plants produced 30 times as much. ⁹Whoever is willing to listen, listen to what I say."

¹⁰The apprentices approached Jesus after he spoke that parable and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you speak to the crowd?" ¹¹Jesus answered, "God is revealing to you what he has not revealed before about how he is making people to be his people to rule over from heaven. But he has not revealed this to the people in this crowd. ¹²Those who are able to understand what God has revealed to them, God will enable them to understand more. But from those who are not able understand what I say in my parables, even the little that they are able to understand God will take from them. ¹³This is why I use parables when I speak to people, because although they see the miracles that I do, they do not understand what it means, and although they hear what I teach, they do not really learn what it means. ¹⁴What these people do completely fulfills what God told the prophet Isaiah to say long ago when he said: 'You will hear what I say, but you will not understand it. Similarly, you will see what I do, but you will not learn what it means.'

¹⁵God also said to Isaiah,

'These people are not able to understand these things.

Even though they have ears which are able to hear, they do not understand my message.

Even though I have done many great things in their sight, it is as if they shut their eyes. For they do not understand the things they have seen me do.

If they had not done this, they would be able to see with their eyes and understand what I have done. Similarly, they would be able to hear my message and understand what it means. They would have been able to understand what I have done and what I have said, and they would have repented of their sins, and I would have forgiven their sins.'

¹⁶But God has blessed you by making you able to understand what you see with your eyes and hear with your ears.

¹⁷For what I say to you is true: Many prophets and righteous people who lived long ago desired to see what you are seeing me do, but they did not see it. Those prophets and righteous people also desired to hear the things that you have heard me say, but they did not hear what you have heard me say."

¹⁸Now listen to me explain the parable about the man who sowed seeds in various kinds of soil. ¹⁹Some people hear the message about how God is causing people to be his people, but they do not understand it. They are like the path where some of the seeds fell. Like the bird who eats the seed, Satan, the evil one, comes and causes these people to forget what they have heard. ²⁰Some people hear God's message and immediately accept it joyfully. They are like the rocky places where some seeds fell. ²¹But because it does not penetrate deeply into their hearts like deep roots, they believe it for only a short time. When others treat them badly and make them suffer because they believe in what I have told them, they quickly stop believing it any longer. ²²Some people hear God's message, but they desire to be rich, so they worry only about what they need to live, as well as money and possessions. These things choke out their understanding of God's message like weeds that choke a plant growing among them. As a result, they do not do the things that please God. ²³But some people hear my message and understand it. They do many things that please God. In this way they are like the seed which fell on good soil, and it produces thirty, sixty, or one hundred grains."

²⁴Jesus also told the crowd another parable. He said, "When God makes people to be his people to rule over from heaven, it will be like this story: A man is sowing good seed in his field. ²⁵While that man was sleeping and not guarding the field, someone who did not like the man came and scattered weed seeds in the midst of the good seeds. Then he left. ²⁶After the seeds sprouted and the plants grew, the heads of grain began to form. But the weeds also grew and were visible to the man. ²⁷So the servants of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, you certainly gave us good seeds and those are the ones we sowed in your field. So where did these weeds come from?' ²⁸The landowner said to them, 'My enemy did this.' Then his servants said to him, 'Do you want us to pull up the weeds?' ²⁹He said to them, 'No! Do not do that. For you might pull up some of the wheat at the same time as pulling up the weeds. ³⁰Let the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest time. At that time, I will say to those who will reap, 'First gather the weeds, and tie them into bundles for burning. Then gather the wheat and put it into my storehouse.'"

³¹Jesus also told this parable: "When God makes people his people to rule from heaven, it is similar to what happens when mustard seeds grow after a man plants them in his field. ³²For the mustard seed starts as the smallest seed of any seed. But after it grows, it becomes a tree on which birds can live, much bigger than any other plants which are planted in a garden. It is the same way when God makes people his people to rule over. It starts out with few people, but eventually, many people become God's people whom he rules over."

³³Jesus also told this parable: "When God makes people his people to rule over from heaven, it is like when a woman mixed yeast into 40 liters of bread. This caused the bread to get bigger. Similarly, God's kingdom will start out being small, but will grow much bigger."

³⁴When Jesus taught the crowd these lessons, he only taught them using parables. ³⁵By doing that, he proved true what God told one of the prophets to write long ago:

"I will speak in parables; I will tell parables to teach what I have kept secret since I created the world."

³⁶After Jesus sent the crowd away, he went into the house. Then the apprentices approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable about the weeds that grew in the wheat field." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed in the story represents me, the Son of Man. ³⁸The field represents this world, where people live. The seeds that grew food represent God's people who he rules over as their father. The weeds represent the people who have the devil as their father. ³⁹The enemy who sowed the weed seeds represents the devil. The time when the reapers will harvest the grain represents the time when the world will end. The reapers represent the angels. ⁴⁰These weeds are gathered from the field and burned. That represents what will happen {to evil people} when God judges all people, when the world will end. It will be like this: ⁴¹I, the Son of Man, will send my angels, and they will gather from among all that I am ruling the people that cause others to sin and all those who violate God's law. ⁴²The angels will throw those people into the fires of hell, which is like a furnace. There they will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will be in severe pain. ⁴³However, the people who have pleased God with their actions will be glorified with him in heaven when he rules over them as a loving father. Whoever is willing to listen, listen to what I say.

⁴⁴"When God makes people his people to rule from heaven, it is like a treasure that a man found which another person had buried in a field. When he dug it up, he buried it again so no one else would find it. Then he happily went and sold all his possessions to obtain money to buy that field. He then went and bought the field and acquired that treasure.

⁴⁵Also, when God makes people his people to rule from heaven it is like what a merchant did who was looking for very valuable pearls to buy. ⁴⁶When he found one very valuable pearl that was for sale, he sold all his possessions to acquire enough money to buy that pearl. Then he went and bought it.

⁴⁷Similarly, when God makes people his people to rule from heaven, it is like what happens when fishermen cast their net into the sea. They caught all kinds of fish, both useful and worthless fish. ⁴⁸When the net was full, the fishermen pulled it up onto the shore. Then they sat there and put the good fish into containers, but they threw the worthless ones away. ⁴⁹This is like what will happen to people when the world ends. The angels will come to where God is judging people and will separate the wicked people from the righteous people. ⁵⁰The angels will throw the wicked people into the fire in hell. There they will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will be in severe pain."

⁵¹Then Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you understand all these parables I have told you?" They said to him, "Yes, we understand them." ⁵²Then he said, "Those teachers of the law who have become God's people over whom he rules from heaven are like a house owner who shares new and old things out of their treasure. Similarly, the teacher of the law teaches people old teachings as well as new teachings from me."

⁵³When Jesus had finished telling these parables, he left that area. ⁵⁴Then Jesus went to the town of Nazareth, his hometown. On the Sabbath he began to teach the people in the synagogue. The result was that the people there were astonished, and some were saying, "From where does this man get his wisdom and ability to do miracles?

⁵⁵For he is just the son of the carpenter. His mother is certainly named Mary, and his younger brothers are James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas! ⁵⁶And all of his sisters also live here in our town. So how is he able to teach and do all these things?" ⁵⁷The people there sinned and refused to accept that Jesus had such authority. So Jesus said to them, "People honor me and other prophets everywhere else we go, but in our hometowns and among our own families, we are not honored." ⁵⁸Jesus did not perform many miracles there, because the people did not believe that he had such authority.

Chapter 14

¹During that time the ruler Herod Antipas heard reports about Jesus performing miracles and teaching. ²He said to his servants, "That must be John the Baptizer. He must have risen from the dead, and that is why he has power to do these miracles." ³⁻⁴{Herod said John had been raised from the dead because John had died.} This is how he died: John was saying to Herod Antipas that it was not lawful to have Herodias as his wife. Herodias, who was the wife of Herod's brother Philip, had her servants throw John in prison because he was saying this. ⁵Herod wanted to order his men to execute John, but he was afraid of the masses of people, because they believed that John was a prophet speaking for God.

⁶One day, there was a party to celebrate Herod's birthday, and Herodias' daughter danced for his guests. Her dancing pleased Herod very much, ⁷so he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Herodias told her daughter beforehand what to say, so she said to Herod, "I want you to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it here on a platter to show that he is really dead!" ⁹The king was now very sorry that he had promised to give Herodias' daughter whatever she wanted. But because he had made a vow, and because all his guests had heard him do so, he felt that he had to do what he promised. So he ordered his servants to do what she wanted. ¹⁰He sent soldiers to the prison, and they cut off John's head. ¹¹Then they put John's head on a platter and brought it to the girl. Then the girl took it to her mother. ¹²Later, John's apprentices went to the prison, took John's body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. ¹³After Jesus heard that news, he went with the disciples by boat on the Sea of Galilee to a place where no one lived.

After the crowds heard about where he had gone, they left their towns and followed him, walking along the shore.

¹⁴When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd waiting for him. He felt sorry for them, and he healed the sick people who were among them.

¹⁵When it was evening, the apprentices came to Jesus and said, "This is a place where nobody lives, and it is very late in the day. Tell the crowds to go back to their towns so they can buy food." ¹⁶But Jesus said to his disciples, "They do not need to leave to get food. Instead, you yourselves should give them something to eat!" ¹⁷The disciples said, "We only have five loaves of bread and two cooked fish here with us!" ¹⁸He said, "Bring them to me!" ¹⁹Jesus told the crowd of people who had gathered there to sit on the grass. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish from the apprentices. He looked up to the sky and prayed, thanking God for them, and broke them into many pieces. Then he gave the pieces back to his apprentices, and they distributed them to the crowd. ²⁰All the people ate until they were no longer hungry. Then the disciples gathered the pieces that were left over and filled twelve baskets with them. ²¹About 5,000 men ate at that time, not counting the women and children!

²²Right after that happened, Jesus compelled the disciples to get in the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In the meantime, he was going to send the crowd home. ²³After he sent the crowd away, he went up into the hills to pray by himself. It was evening, and he was alone in that place. ²⁴By this time the disciples were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The wind was blowing very hard in the opposite direction that they were sailing, tossing the boat around on the waves. ²⁵Then Jesus came down from the hills to the water sometime between three and six o'clock in the morning. He approached the boat, walking on the water. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they thought that he must be a ghost. So they were terrified, and they screamed in fear. ²⁷Immediately Jesus said to them, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!" ²⁸Peter said to him, "Lord, if it really is you, tell me to walk on the water to you!" ²⁹Jesus said, "Come!" So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰But when Peter saw the big waves from the strong wind, he became afraid. Thus, he began to sink in the water and cried out, "Lord, rescue me!" ³¹Right away Jesus reached out with his hand and grabbed Peter. He said to him, "You only trust in me a little bit! You should not have doubted that I could keep you from sinking!" ³²Then, when Jesus and Peter got in the boat, the wind stopped blowing. ³³All of the disciples who were in the boat bowed down and worshiped Jesus, and they said, "You certainly are the Son of God!"

³⁴When they had gone across the lake in the boat, they reached the shore at the town of Gennesaret. ³⁵The men of that area recognized Jesus, so they sent people to inform those who lived in the whole region that Jesus had come.

Then the people brought to Jesus everyone who was sick. ³⁶The sick people kept begging him to allow them to touch even the edge of his robe so that they would be healed. And so, everyone who touched his robe was healed from their sicknesses.

Chapter 15

¹Then some Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws came from Jerusalem to talk to Jesus. They said, ²"We see that your apprentices disobey the traditions of our ancestors! They do not perform the proper ritual of washing their hands before they eat!" ³Jesus answered them, "And I see that you refuse to obey God's commands just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you! ⁴God gave these two commands: 'Honor your father and your mother.' He also wrote, 'Anyone who speaks in an evil way about their father or mother God will punish with death.'⁵But you tell the people that they can say to their father and mother, 'What I was going to give to you to help provide for you, I have now promised to give to God', ⁶and you tell people that they do not need to honor their father since they are giving their goods to God. By telling them to do that, you ignore what God commanded so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you! ⁷You only pretend to be good! Isaiah told the truth about you when God spoke through him saying, ⁸'These people talk as if they honor me, but they do not really desire to honor me, ⁹They do not really worship me. For they teach people to obey man-made commandments which I did not command them to follow.'"

¹⁰Then Jesus called the crowd to come nearer to him. He said to them, "Listen to what I am about to tell you and try to understand it. ¹¹Nothing that a person puts into his mouth to eat causes God to consider them ceremonially unclean. But rather, it is what people say that shows that a person is ceremonially unclean."

¹²Later the apprentices went to Jesus and said, "Do you know that the Pharisees heard what you said and became very angry at you?" ¹³Then Jesus told them this parable. "My Father in heaven will get rid of all those who teach things that are against what he says, just like a farmer gets rid of plants that he did not plant by pulling them up by their roots. ¹⁴Do not pay any attention to the Pharisees. They are like blind people who lead other blind people into a pit because they cannot see where they are going. For they do not know how to teach people to obey God."

¹⁵Peter said to Jesus, "Explain to us the parable about what a person eats." ¹⁶Jesus replied to them, "You ought to be able to understand what I am teaching by now! But you still do not understand. ¹⁷You ought to understand that whatever food people eat enters their stomachs and then passes out of their bodies. ¹⁸But the evil words which a person speaks from their innermost desires is what causes God to consider them ceremonially unclean. ¹⁹This is because it is people's innermost desires that cause them to think evil things, to murder people, to commit adultery, to commit sexual sins, to steal things, to testify falsely against someone, or to speak evil about others. ²⁰It is these actions that cause God to consider people ceremonially unclean. But to eat with unwashed hands does not cause God to consider people this way."

²¹After Jesus and his disciples left the district of Galilee, they all went toward the region where the cities of Tyre and Sidon are located. ²²A woman from the group of people called Canaanites, who live in that region, came to Jesus. She kept shouting to him, "Lord, you are the descendant of King David. You are the Messiah! Help me! For my daughter is suffering very much because a demon controls her." ²³But Jesus did not answer her at all. The apprentices said to him, "Tell her to leave, for she keeps bothering us by shouting behind us as we are walking." ²⁴Jesus said to her, "God has sent me only to the people of Israel, because they are like sheep who have lost their way." ²⁵But the woman came closer to Jesus. She knelt down in front of him and pled, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶Jesus responded to her, "It is not good for someone to take the food the mother has prepared for the children and then throw it to the little dogs." ²⁷But the woman replied, "Lord, what you say is correct, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall to the floor when their masters sit at their tables and eat!" ²⁸Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, because you believe in me, I will heal your daughter as you desire!" At that moment the demon left her daughter, and she became well.

²⁹Then Jesus and his disciples went away from that area, and came near to the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus climbed the hill near there and sat down to teach the people. ³⁰Large crowds came to him bringing lame people, crippled people, and blind people, those who were unable to talk, and many others who had various sicknesses. They laid them in front of Jesus in order that he would heal them. And he healed them. ³¹The crowd saw him heal people who could not talk, crippled people, lame people, and blind people, and they were amazed and glorified God.

³²Then Jesus called his apprentices to him and said, "This crowd of people has been with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. Therefore, I feel sorry for them, and do not want to send them away while they are still hungry. For if I did that, they might faint on the way home." ³³The disciples said to him, "We certainly will not find enough food for this large crowd here in the desert!" ³⁴Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They answered him, "Seven small loaves and a few small, cooked fish." ³⁵Then Jesus told the people to sit on the ground. ³⁶He took the seven loaves and the cooked fish. After he had thanked God for them, he broke them into pieces, and he gave them to the apprentices to distribute to the crowd. ³⁷All those people ate and had plenty to satisfy them. Then the disciples collected the pieces of food that were left over, and they filled seven large baskets with them. ³⁸There were 4,000 men who ate, and this was not counting the women or the children who also ate.

³⁹After Jesus sent the crowd away, he and the disciples got in a boat and sailed to the region of Magadan.

Chapter 16

¹Some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus in order to test him. They said to him, "Show us that God has really sent you to us! Perform for us a sign from God!" ²He answered them,^[1] ["In our country, if the sky is red in the evening, we say, 'It will be good weather tomorrow.' ³But if the sky is red in the morning you say, 'It will be stormy weather today.' By looking at the sky, you can tell what the weather will be, but when you see the things that are now happening all around you, you do not understand how they tell what God is about to do.] ⁴You are an evil people who does not love God faithfully. You seek a sign, but I will only give you one sign, the sign of Jonah the prophet." And Jesus and his disciples departed from them.

⁵After they sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the apprentices realized that they had forgotten to take any food with them. ⁶At that point, Jesus said to them, "Be careful not to accept the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees want to give you." ⁷They were discussing among themselves about what Jesus might have meant, saying "He must have said that because we forgot to bring any bread" ⁸But Jesus knew what they were discussing and said to them, "I am disappointed that you think it is because you forgot to bring bread that I talked about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. You believe in me only a little bit. ⁹I am disappointed that you do not realize the significance of, nor do you remember when I fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread. You even gathered up many baskets! ¹⁰Neither do you realize the significance of nor remember when I fed 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread. You also gathered up many baskets then! ¹¹You should have understood that I was not really speaking about bread. Do not accept yeast from the Pharisees and the Sadducees." ¹²Then the disciples understood that Jesus was not talking about the yeast that is in bread. Instead, he was talking about the wrong teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

¹³When Jesus and his apprentices entered into the region near the city of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, really am?" ¹⁴They answered, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer, who has come back to life again. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah, who has returned from heaven as God promised. Still others say that you are the prophet Jeremiah or one of the other prophets who lived long ago, who has come back to life again." ¹⁵Jesus said to them, "Who then do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter said to him, "You are the Messiah! You are the Son of the one true God." ¹⁷Then Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of Jonah, God, my Father who is in the heavens, has blessed you by revealing this to you. For no human could have revealed this to you. ¹⁸I also say to you: You are Peter, which means 'rock.' You will be like a sturdy foundation for those who believe in me, like a rock is for a building. And no enemy, not even death, will be able to destroy it." ¹⁹Then he said, "I will give you authority among God's people over whom he rules from heaven. God will approve your decision

about anything you prohibit on the earth. Similarly, God will approve your decision about anything you permit on the earth.” ²⁰Then Jesus warned the apprentices not to tell anyone at that time that he was the Messiah.

²¹From that time on, Jesus the Messiah began to teach the apprentices that it was necessary for him to go to the city of Jerusalem. There, the ruling elders, the chief priests, and the men who taught the Jewish laws would cause him to suffer and die. Then on the third day after that, he would come alive again. ²²But Peter took Jesus aside and began to scold him for saying these things. He said, “Lord, may God never permit that to happen to you!” ²³Then Jesus turned to look at Peter, and he said to him, “Get out of my sight! For Satan is speaking through you and trying to get me to disobey God. You are not thinking what God thinks, but only what people think!”

²⁴Then Jesus said to his apprentices, “If any one of you wants to be my apprentice, you must disregard what you desire. You must also be willing to suffer pain like criminals who are forced to carry crosses to the places where they will be crucified. That is what anyone who wants to be my apprentice must do. ²⁵You must do that because those who try to save their lives by denying that they belong to me will not live with me forever. But those who are killed because they are my apprentices will live forever with me. ²⁶For it benefits no one eternally to save their life now, and then for God to punish them eternally after they finally die. For there is nothing in this world which is worth the price which God puts on the life of a person. ²⁷I, the Son of Man, will come in the glory of my Father, along with his angels. After this, he will judge people based on whether they have done things that pleased him or displeased him. ²⁸Listen carefully! Some of you who are here will see me, the Son of Man, coming to rule over his people before you die!”

16:2 ^[1]

Chapter 17

¹Seven days after Jesus said those things, he took Peter, James, and John, the younger brother of James, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ²While they were on the mountain, the three disciples saw Jesus’ appearance change. His face shone like the sun, and his clothing shone and became bright like light. ³Suddenly the prophets Moses and Elijah appeared, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁴Peter saw them and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is a good thing for us to be here! If you want me to, I will set up three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud came over them. They heard the voice of God saying from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I love. He pleases me very much. So you must listen to him!” ⁶When the three apprentices heard God speaking, they were exceedingly afraid. As a result, they fell face down on the ground. ⁷Jesus came to them and touched them and said to them, “Stand up! Do not be afraid!” ⁸And when they looked up, they saw that Jesus was the only one who was still there.

⁹While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Do not tell anyone what you saw on the mountain top until God has caused me, the Son of Man, to become alive again after I die.” ¹⁰The three apprentices who were on the mountain with Jesus asked him, “If you are the Messiah, why do the men who teach the Jewish laws say that it is necessary for Elijah to come back to earth before the Messiah is supposed to come?” ¹¹Jesus answered them, “It is true that Elijah is coming and will prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. ¹²But note this: Elijah has already come, and our leaders did not recognize him as the one who would come before the Messiah. Instead, they did all of the evil things to him which they desired. And those same leaders will soon treat me, the Son of Man, in the same manner.” ¹³Then the three apprentices understood that when he was talking about Elijah, he was referring to John the Baptist.

¹⁴When Jesus and the three disciples returned to the crowds of his apprentices, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵He said to him, “Master, have mercy on my son and heal him! He has epilepsy and suffers very much. Because of this illness, he has fallen into fire and into water many times. ¹⁶I brought him to your apprentices in order that they might heal him, but they were not able to heal him.” ¹⁷Jesus responded, “You people do not believe at all in God’s ability to heal people. How corrupt you are! I have been with you this long, and you still are not able to do this! Bring the boy here to me!” ¹⁸When they brought the boy to Jesus, Jesus commanded the demon to come

out of the boy. The demon went out, and the boy was healed from that time onward. ¹⁹Later, some of the apprentices approached Jesus when he was by himself and asked him, "Why were we not able to drive out the demon?" ²⁰He answered them, "It is because you believe in God only a little bit. What I say is true: Mustard seeds are very small seeds, but they grow and become large plants. Similarly, if you believe even a little bit that God will do what you ask him to, you will be able to do anything! You could command a mountain to move, and it would move.

²¹^[1] [But this kind of demon does not go out except with prayer and fasting.] ²²When the disciples had gathered together in the region of Galilee, Jesus said to them, "Someone will have the leaders arrest me, the Son of Man. ²³They will kill me, but God will cause me to become alive again on the third day after I am killed." When the disciples heard that, they became very sad.

²⁴When Jesus and the disciples came to the city of Capernaum, the men who collected taxes for the temple approached Peter and said to him, "Surely your teacher pays the temple tax, correct?" ²⁵He answered them, "Yes, he does pay it." Then the disciples came into the house where Jesus was. Before Peter began to speak, Jesus said to him, "Simon, from whom do you think rulers get their money? Do they collect taxes from the citizens of their own country, or from citizens of countries they have conquered?" ²⁶Peter answered him, "From citizens of other countries." Then Jesus said to him, "So citizens of their own country do not need to pay taxes. ²⁷But so that the tax collectors will not become angry with us, go to the Sea of Galilee, cast your fish line and hook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth, you will find a silver coin that is worth enough to pay the tax for you and me. Take that coin and give it to the temple tax collectors."

17:21 ^[1]

Chapter 18

¹Immediately the apprentices approached Jesus and asked him, "Which of us people over whom God rules from heaven are most important?" ²Jesus called a child to come to him, and he placed that child in the middle of the group of him and his apprentices. ³He said, "What I tell you is true: If you do not change and become as humble as little children, surely you will not become one of God's people over whom he rules from heaven. ⁴The people who become as humble as this child are the most important among the people over whom God rules from heaven. ⁵Whoever welcomes a person who is humble like this child in my authority, to God it is as though they receive me.

⁶God will severely punish anyone who causes one who is humble like these little children who believe in me to sin. It would certainly be better for them if they tied a heavy stone around their neck and someone threw them into the depths of the sea than for God to judge them. ⁷There will always be people in this world who will cause others to sin. God will certainly judge the people of this world because they cause people to sin! ⁸So if you are wanting to use one of your hands or feet to sin, stop using that hand or foot! Even if you have to cut it off so you will not sin! Suppose you had only one hand or one foot and still lived forever with God. How much better is that than if you had both hands and both feet and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell because of your sin. ⁹If you are also wanting to use one of your eyes to sin, stop looking at things that cause you to sin, even if you have to gouge it out so you will not sin! Suppose you had only one eye and still lived forever with God. How much better is that than if you had both eyes and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell.

¹⁰Be sure not to look down on even one person who is humble like a child. I tell you truly that the angels who protect them can always go to my Father and report to him if you mistreat them. ¹¹^[1] [For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.] ¹²Consider the following situation. If a person had 100 sheep and one of them got lost, he would surely leave the 99 sheep that were on the hillside and go and search for the lost one. ¹³What I say to you is true: If the person found it, they would rejoice very much. They would be happy that none of the 99 sheep strayed away, but they would rejoice even more because they had found the one sheep that had strayed away. ¹⁴In the same way that the shepherd does not want one of his sheep to stray away, so God, your Father in the heavens, does not want any of these children to go to hell away from him.

¹⁵If a fellow believer sins against you, go to him by yourself, and reprove him for sinning against you. If that person listens to you and feels sorry that he has sinned against you, you will be like brothers once again. ¹⁶If, however, that person does not listen to you or feel sorry for sinning against you, have one or two other believers go with you. Do this so that there will be two or three witnesses to confirm everything of which you accuse them, just as the law of Moses says. ¹⁷If the one who has sinned against you does not listen to the other believers you bring, tell the matter to the entire congregation so that they can correct him. And if the person does not listen to the congregation, exclude him from among you, just as you would exclude non-Jewish people and tax collectors who do not believe. ¹⁸What I say to you is true: God will approve whatever you prohibit on the earth. Similarly, God will approve whatever you permit on the earth. ¹⁹I also say to you: If two of you who live on earth agree with each other about whatever you ask for, my Father who is in heaven will give you what you ask. ²⁰Your Father does this because when two or three of you are gathered together because of me, I am there spiritually also."

²¹Then Peter approached Jesus and said to him, "Lord, how many times must I forgive a fellow believer who keeps on sinning against me? If he keeps asking me to forgive him, must I forgive him as many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "I tell you that the number of times you must forgive someone is not just up to seven, but you must forgive him 77 times. ²³For this reason, when God rules over his people from heaven, it is like when a king wanted his servants to pay the debts they owed him. ²⁴The king first brought to himself a servant who owed him a very large sum of money. ²⁵But because the servant did not have enough money to repay what he owed, the king demanded that his people sell the servant, his wife, his children, and everything he possessed to someone else. Then the king would take that money as a repayment. ²⁶Then that servant fell on his knees in front of the king. He said to him, 'Be patient with me, master, and I will pay you all of it eventually.' ²⁷The king, knowing that the servant could never pay all of that huge debt, felt sorry for him. So he canceled his debt and released him. ²⁸Then, after going out from the king, that servant went to another one of the king's servants who owed him a smaller sum of money. He grabbed him by the throat, started choking him, and said to him, 'Pay back what you owe me!' ²⁹That other servant fell on his knees and begged him saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ³⁰But that servant would not cancel the small debt that the man owed him. Instead, he put the other servant into prison until he could pay back the debt that he owed to him. ³¹When the other servants of the king learned that this had happened, they were very distressed. So they went to the king and reported in detail what the one servant did to the other servant. ³²Then the king summoned the servant who had owed him a very large sum of money. He said to him, 'You wicked servant! I canceled the large debt that you owed me because you begged me to do so! ³³You should have been merciful and canceled your fellow servant's debt, just like I was merciful to you and canceled your debt!' ³⁴The king was very angry, so he handed this servant over to some jailers, who would torture him severely until he paid all of the debt that he owed." ³⁵Then Jesus concluded the parable by saying, "That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if you are not merciful and sincerely forgive a fellow believer who sins against you."

18:11 ^[1]

Chapter 19

¹After Jesus said these things, he took his disciples and left the region of Galilee. They went to the part of the region of Judea that is east of the Jordan River. ²Large crowds followed him there, and he healed the sick among them.

³Some Pharisees approached him and said to him, "Does the Law of Moses permit a man to divorce his wife for any reason?" They asked that in order to test him. ⁴Jesus said to them, "You have read in the scriptures that at the time when God first created people, he made them male and female. ⁵That explains why God said, 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and marries his wife. The two of them will be united as though they were one person' ⁶Consequently, although they functioned as two separate people before, they are now united as if they were one person. Since that is true, a man must not separate from his wife whom God has joined to him."

⁷The Pharisees then said to him, "If that is true, why did Moses command that a man who wanted to divorce his wife should give her a paper stating his reason for divorcing her and then send her away?" ⁸Jesus said to them, "It was because your ancestors were stubborn that Moses allowed them to divorce their wives, and you are no different than them. But when God first created a man and a woman, he did not intend for them to separate from each other. ⁹I am telling you that God considers any man adulterous who divorces his wife, unless it is because she committed adultery, and marries another woman. Similarly, God considers adulterous whoever marries the woman whom the man divorced." ¹⁰The apprentices said to him, "If that is true, it is better for men never to marry!" ¹¹He answered, "Not every man is able to accept this teaching, but only the men whom God enables to accept it. ¹²There are men who do not marry because their genitals have been defective ever since they were born. There are other men who do not marry because they have been castrated. Then there are still other men who decide not to marry in order to serve God as he rules from heaven. You who are able to understand what I have said about marriage should accept it."

¹³Then some people brought little children to Jesus in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the apprentices scolded the people for doing that. ¹⁴But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them! For it is these that God rules over from heaven." ¹⁵Jesus then laid his hands on the children to bless them. Then he left that place.

¹⁶As Jesus was walking along, a young man approached him and said to him, "Teacher, what good deeds must I do in order to live with God forever?" ¹⁷Jesus said to him, "Why are you asking me about what is good to do? Only one being is good, and he has told people what good they should do. That being is God. But in order to answer your question about desiring to live with God forever, I will tell you to keep the commandments that God gave Moses." ¹⁸The man asked Jesus, "Which commandments must I keep?" Jesus answered him, "Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal things, do not testify falsely, ¹⁹honor your father and your mother, and love every other person as much as you love yourself." ²⁰The young man said to Jesus, "I have perfectly obeyed all those commandments. What else must I do in order to live with God forever?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "If you desire to be blameless before God, go home, sell everything that you own, and give the money to poor people. In doing this, you will be spiritually rich because you will live with God in heaven forever. Then come and be my disciple!" ²²When the young man heard those words, he went away feeling sad. This was because he was very rich and did not want to give away everything he owned.

²³Then Jesus said to the apprentices, "What I say to you is true: It is very difficult for rich people to please God and for him to rule over them from heaven as his people. ²⁴Also I say to you: It is impossible for a camel to pass through the small hole that is in a needle. It is even more difficult for rich people to please God and for him to rule over them from heaven as his people." ²⁵When the apprentices heard this, they were very astounded. So they said to Jesus, "Certainly no one will be able to live with God forever if this is true!" ²⁶Then Jesus looked intently at them and said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves. But it is possible for God to do anything!" ²⁷Then Peter said to him, "Look at us. We have left everything behind and we have become your apprentices in order to follow you. So what benefit will we get for doing that?" ²⁸Jesus said to them, "What I say to you is true: When God makes the new earth, and when I, the Son of Man, sit on my throne in my glory, those of you who have accompanied me will each sit on a throne. You will judge the people of the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹God will reward those who, because they were my apprentice, left behind a house or a plot of ground, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or any other family members. God will give them a hundred times as many benefits as they have given up. And they will live with God forever. ³⁰But many people who consider themselves to be important in this life now will be unimportant in eternity when they are living with God. Likewise, many people whom people consider to be unimportant now will be important in eternity, when they are living with God."

Chapter 20

¹"When God rules from heaven, it is like when a person who owns land goes out in the morning to hire people to work in his vineyard. ²He promised the men whom he hired that he would pay them the standard wage for

working one day. Then he sent them to his vineyards. ³At nine o'clock that same morning he went back to the marketplace. There he saw more men who did not have work. ⁴He said to them, 'Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there. I will pay you whatever wage is fair.' So they also went to his vineyard and began to work. ⁵At noon and at three o'clock he again went to the marketplace and found other laborers whom he promised to pay a fair wage. ⁶At five o'clock he went to the marketplace again and saw other men standing there who were not working. He said to them, 'Why are you standing here all day and not working?' ⁷They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'I will hire you. Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there.' So they went.

⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Tell the workers to come so that you can give them their pay. Pay the men first who started working last, and pay the men last who started working first.' ⁹The manager paid a standard day's wage to each of the men who started working around five o'clock in the afternoon. ¹⁰When the men who had begun working early in the morning went to get their wages, they thought that they would receive more than the standard wage. But they also received only the standard wage. ¹¹So they complained to the owner of the vineyard because they thought their payment was unfair. ¹²They said to him, 'These men only worked one hour! Yet, you have paid them the same wage as you paid us even though we worked hard all day. We even worked through the hottest part!' ¹³The owner of the vineyard said to one of those who complained, 'Friend, I did not treat you unfairly. You agreed with me to work the whole day for a standard day's wage. ¹⁴Stop complaining to me! Take your wages and go! For I desire to give the men who started working after you the same wage as you. ¹⁵I certainly have a right to spend my money as I desire! You should not be envious because I am generous!'" ¹⁶"Similarly, some people whom people consider to be unimportant now will be important when they are living with God forever. Likewise, people who consider themselves to be important in this life now will be unimportant after they receive God's judgment."

¹⁷When Jesus was walking on the road up to Jerusalem along with the 12 apprentices, he took them to a place by themselves in order that he could talk to them privately. Then he said to them, ¹⁸"Listen carefully! We are now going up to Jerusalem. While we are there, someone will compel the chief priests and the men who teach the Jewish laws to arrest me, the Son of Man. They will put me on trial and they will condemn me to die. ¹⁹Then they will give me to non-Jewish people so that they can make fun of me, whip me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross. But on the third day after that, God will cause me to live again."

²⁰After this, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, brought her two sons to Jesus. She bowed down before Jesus and asked him to do her a favor. ²¹Jesus said to her, "What do you want me to do for you?" She said to him, "Permit my two sons to sit in the places of most honor when you become king, one on your right and the other on your left." ²²Jesus said to her and her sons, "You do not understand what you are asking for. Are you willing to suffer like I am about to suffer?" James and John answered him, "Yes, we are willing to do that." ²³Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, you will suffer as I will suffer. But I am not the one who chooses those who will sit next to me and rule with me. God, my Father, will give those places to the ones whom he appoints."

²⁴When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had requested, they became angry with them. For they also wanted to rule with Jesus in the positions of most honor. ²⁵So Jesus called all of them together and said to them, "You know that those who rule the non-Jewish people enjoy showing that they are powerful. ²⁶You should not be like those rulers among yourselves. On the contrary, if any of you wants God to consider him great, he must serve the rest of you. ²⁷Likewise, everyone among you who wants God to consider him to be the most important must become a servant for the rest of you. ²⁸You should imitate me. Even though I am the Son of Man, I did not come for others to serve me. On the contrary, I came in order to serve others. I came also to allow them to kill me, so that when I die, it would be like a payment to set people free from God punishing them for their sins."

²⁹As they were leaving the city of Jericho, a large crowd of people followed them. ³⁰As Jesus and the apprentices walked along, two blind men who were sitting on the side of the road heard that Jesus was passing by. So they yelled to him, "Lord, Descendant of King David, take pity on us!" ³¹People in the crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. But the blind men yelled even louder, "Lord, Descendant of King David, have pity on us!" ³²Jesus

stopped and called them to come to him. Then he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³³They answered him, "Lord, heal our eyes so that we can see!" ³⁴Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Immediately they were able to see, and they followed after Jesus.

Chapter 21

¹⁻²As Jesus and his apprentices approached the city of Jerusalem, they came to the village of Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to two of his apprentices, "Go to the village just ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey and her colt which someone tied up. Untie them and bring them here to me. ³If anyone asks you why you are taking them, tell him that the Lord needs them. He will then allow you to lead them away." ⁴⁻⁵All of this happened to prove true what God said through the prophet long ago. That prophet wrote, "Tell the people who live in Jerusalem, 'Look! Your king is coming to you! He will come humbly, riding on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.'"

⁶So the two apprentices went and did what Jesus told them to do. ⁷They brought the donkey and its colt to Jesus. They placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. Then Jesus mounted and sat on the cloaks. ⁸Then a large crowd spread some of their outer clothing on the road. Other people cut off branches from palm trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that walked in front of him and those who walked behind him were shouting,

"Praise the Messiah, the Descendant of King David!"

"May the Lord bless this one who comes as God's representative!"

"Praise God, who is in heaven!"

¹⁰As Jesus entered Jerusalem, many people from all over the city became excited and were saying, "Who is this man whom they are honoring in this way?" ¹¹The crowd that was walking with him answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from the town of Nazareth in the region of Galilee!"

¹²Then Jesus went into the temple courtyard and chased out all of those who were buying and selling things there. He also overturned the tables of those who were changing Roman coins for money that people used to pay the temple tax. He also overturned the seats of those who were selling pigeons for sacrifices. ¹³Then he said to them, "A prophet wrote in the Scriptures that God said, 'I want my house to be a place where people pray to me,' but you people have made it into a place where robbers hide!"

¹⁴After that, many blind people and lame people came to Jesus in the temple to ask him to heal them. And Jesus healed them. ¹⁵The high priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws saw the marvelous deeds that Jesus did. They also saw the children shouting in the temple, "We praise the Messiah, the Descendant of King David!" And so, they were very angry at Jesus. ¹⁶They asked him, "What they are saying cannot be correct!" Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, it is! For you have certainly read what the psalmist wrote, when he said to God, 'You have taught infants and young children to praise you.'"

¹⁷Then Jesus and the apprentices left the crowds and the city. They went to the village of Bethany, and they stayed there that night.

¹⁸Early the next morning, when they were returning to the city, Jesus was hungry. ¹⁹He saw a fig tree near the road, so he went over to it to pick some figs to eat. But when he got close, he saw that there were only leaves on it. So he said to the fig tree, "May you never again produce figs!" As a result, the fig tree immediately dried up. ²⁰When the apprentices saw that the tree dried up, they were astonished and said to Jesus, "How did the fig tree dry up so quickly?" ²¹Jesus said to them, "What I say to you is true: If you believe that God has power to do what you ask him to and you do not doubt that, you will be able to do things such as I have done to this fig tree. You will even be able to do marvelous deeds such as saying to that hill over there, 'Uproot yourself and throw yourself into the sea,' and

it will happen! ²²In addition to that, whenever you ask God for something when you pray to him, and you believe that he will give it to you, you will receive it from him."

²³After that, Jesus went into the temple courtyard. While he was teaching the people, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him. They asked, "By what authority are you doing these things?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "First I will ask you a question, and if you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do these things.

²⁵Who authorized John the Baptizer to baptize people? Was it God, or was it people?" The chief priests and elders debated among themselves about what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say it was from God, he will say that we should have believed John's message!" ²⁶But if we say, 'It was from people,' the crowd might react violently against us. For all the people believe that John was a prophet whom God had sent." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know who authorized John to baptize people." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who authorized me to do the things I did here yesterday."

²⁸"Tell me what you think about this story: There was a man who had two sons. He went to his older son and said, 'My son, go and work in my vineyard today!' ²⁹But the son said to his father, 'I will not go!' But later he changed his mind, and he went to the vineyard and worked. ³⁰Then the father approached his younger son and said what he had said to his older son. That son said, 'Sir, I will go and work in the vineyard today.' But he did not go and work. ³¹So which of the man's two sons did what their father desired?" They answered, "The older son." Then Jesus said to them, "What I say to you is true: God will rule over tax collectors and prostitutes much sooner than he will rule over you. ³²This is because, even though John the Baptizer explained to you how to live in the right way, you did not believe his message. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed his message, and they turned away from their sinful behavior. But you did not change your minds later and believe in his message when you saw tax collectors and prostitutes believing."

³³"Listen to another story that I will tell you. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a place to collect the juice that would come out of the grapes. He also built a tower in which someone could sit to guard that vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some men who would work in it. Then he went away to another country. ³⁴When it was time to harvest the grapes, the landowner sent some of his servants to the men who were working in the vineyard to get his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³⁵But the renters seized the servants. They beat one of them. Another one they killed, and they killed a third one of them by throwing stones at him. ³⁶So the landowner sent more servants than he had sent the first time. The renters treated those servants the same way that they had treated the other servants. ³⁷After he heard about this, the landowner sent his own son to those working the vineyard to get his share of the grapes. When he sent him, he said to himself, 'They will certainly respect my son and give him my share of the grapes.' ³⁸But when those working in the vineyard saw his son arriving, they said to each other, 'This is the man who will inherit this vineyard! Let us kill him together and divide the property among ourselves.' ³⁹So they grabbed him, dragged him outside the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now I ask you, when the landowner returns to his vineyard, what do you think he will do to those renters?" ⁴¹The people replied, "He will thoroughly destroy those wicked men! Then he will rent the vineyard to others. They will give him his share of the grapes when they are ripe." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "Certainly you have read these words which are written in the scriptures:

'The men who were building the building refused to use a certain stone. But the Lord has put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone in the building! The Lord has done this, and we marvel as we look at it.'

⁴³So I am telling you this: God will no longer let you be the people who belong to him. Instead, he will let a people who do what he requires them to do be his people. ⁴⁴Anyone who falls on this stone will break into pieces, and the stone will crush anyone on whom it falls."

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard this story, they realized that Jesus was accusing them because they did not believe that he was the Messiah. ⁴⁶They wanted to seize him, but they did not do so since they were afraid of what the crowds would do to them if they did that. This is because the crowds thought that Jesus was a prophet.

Chapter 22

¹Then Jesus told the Jewish leaders other stories. The first one went like this: ²"When God rules from heaven, it will be like a king who told his servants that they should prepare a wedding feast for his son. ³When the feast was ready, the king sent his servants to tell the people whom he had invited that it was time for them to come to the wedding feast. The servants went out and told the people, but the people whom the king invited did not want to come. ⁴So the king sent other servants to tell those people again to come to the feast. He told them to say, 'This is what the king says to you, "My servants have prepared the meal. They have butchered and cooked the oxen and the fattened calves. Everything is ready. It is time now for you to come to the wedding feast!"' ⁵But when the servants told them these things, they disregarded what the servants said. Some of them went to their own fields. Others went to their places of business. ⁶The rest of those whom the king had invited seized his servants, treated them poorly, and killed them. ⁷When the king heard what had happened, he became furious. He commanded his soldiers to go and kill those murderers and burn their city. ⁸After his soldiers had done that, the king said to his other servants, 'I have prepared the wedding feast, but the people whom I invited do not deserve to come to it. ⁹So go to the intersections of the main roads in the town. Tell whomever you find there that they should come to the wedding feast.' ¹⁰So the servants went there. They gathered everyone they could find, both bad people and good people. They brought them into the hall where the wedding feast was about to take place, so that those people filled the hall. ¹¹But when the king went into the hall to see the guests, he saw someone who was not wearing the clothes that he provided for the guests to wear at a wedding feast. ¹²The king said to him, 'Friend, you should not have entered this hall. For you are not wearing the clothes that guests wear at wedding feasts!' The man did not say anything, for he did not know what to say. ¹³Then the king said to his servants, 'Tie this person's feet and hands and throw him outside where there is total darkness. This is where people cry out and gnash their teeth because of the pain they are in.'" ¹⁴Then Jesus said, "The message of this story is that God has invited many to come to him, but only a few people are the ones whom he has chosen to come."

¹⁵After Jesus said that, the Pharisees met together in order to plan how they could cause him to say something that would allow them to arrest him. ¹⁶They sent to him some of their apprentices along with some of the Jews who supported Herod Antipas, who ruled the region of Galilee. They said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you teach only what is true. We also know that people's opinions do not influence you. Instead, you truthfully teach all people what God wants them to do. You do not show regard for their social position. ¹⁷So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or is it wrong that we pay taxes to it?" ¹⁸But Jesus knew that they were only asking him this because they wanted to find a reason to get him in trouble with either the Jewish or the Roman authorities. So he said to them, "You are hypocrites! Stop pretending to ask me a genuine question! ¹⁹Show me one of the coins with which people pay the Roman tax." So they showed him a coin called a denarius. ²⁰He said to them, "Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?" ²¹They answered, "It has a picture and the name of Caesar, the man who rules the Roman government." Then he said to them, "In that case give to the government what belongs to the government and give to God what belongs to God." ²²When those men heard Jesus say that, his answer amazed them. Then they departed from him.

²³During that same day, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They are a Jewish group that does not believe that God cause people to become alive again after they die. They asked Jesus, ²⁴"Teacher, Moses wrote in the Scriptures, 'If a man dies who did not have any children, his brother must marry the dead man's widow. This is in order that she can have a child by him that will be considered the descendant of the man who died. That way the dead man will have descendants.' ²⁵There were seven brothers in a family. The oldest one married someone. He and his wife did not have any children, and he died. So, the second brother married the widow. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second brother, as well as to the other five brothers, who each married the woman, and then died without having any children. ²⁷Finally, the woman also died. ²⁸So, at the time when God makes people alive again after they have died, which of the seven brothers will be her husband? They all were married to her at different times." ²⁹Jesus replied to them, "You are incorrect in what you are thinking. You do not understand what is written in the Scriptures. You also do not understand that God is able to make people alive again. ³⁰When God causes all people

who have died to become alive again, no one will marry. Rather, they will be like the angels who are with God. For they also do not marry. ³¹But you surely have read what God said to your ancestors about how he causes people to live again after they have died. He said, ³²'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.' It is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living with God!"

³³When the crowds of people heard Jesus teach that, it amazed them.

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had answered the Sadducees in such a way that the Sadducees were not able to respond to him, the Pharisees gathered together to plan what they would say to him. Then they approached him. ³⁵One of them, a man who was an expert in the laws that God gave Moses, wanted to test Jesus. He asked him, ³⁶"Teacher, which commandment in the laws that God gave Moses is the most important?" ³⁷Jesus quoted the Law as he replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all that you feel, with all that you desire, and with all that you think.' ³⁸That is the most important commandment in the laws that God gave Moses. ³⁹The next most important commandment that everyone must surely obey is: 'You must love the people around you as much as you love yourself.' ⁴⁰These two commandments are the basis of every law that Moses wrote in the Scriptures and of all that the prophets wrote."

⁴¹While the Pharisees were gathered together near Jesus, he asked them, ⁴²"What do you think about the Messiah? Whose descendant is he?" They said to him, "He is the descendant of King David." ⁴³Then Jesus said to them, "If the Messiah is King David's descendant, why did David call him 'Lord' when he spoke what the Holy Spirit told him to speak and said, ⁴⁴'God said to my Lord, "Sit here at my right side, in the place where I will highly honor you above everyone else! Sit here until the time when I completely defeat your enemies!"' ⁴⁵So, since King David called the Messiah 'my Lord,' the Messiah cannot be just someone descended from David! He must be much greater than David!" ⁴⁶No one who heard what Jesus said was able to think of something to say to him in response. After that, no one else ever dared to ask him another question to try to trap him.

Chapter 23

¹Then Jesus said to the crowd and to his apprentices, ²"The Pharisees and the men who teach the Jewish laws have the authority that Moses had when he led Israel. ³Therefore, you should do whatever they tell you that you must do. But do not do what they do, because they themselves do not do those things that they tell you to do. ⁴They require you to obey many rules that are difficult to obey. But they themselves do not obey those rules. It is as if they were tying up very heavy loads and putting them on your shoulders for you to carry. But they will not even move one finger to help you carry them. ⁵Whenever they do good deeds, they do those things so that other people will see them and admire them. For example, they make extra wide the tiny boxes containing portions of Scripture that they wear on their arms. They enlarge the tassels on their robes to make others think that they honor God. ⁶They also want other people to honor them when, at dinners, they sit in the seats where the most important people sit. In the synagogues they want to sit in the same kind of places. ⁷They love for people to greet them with great honor in the markets, and for people to call them 'Teacher.' ⁸But you, my apprentices, should not allow people to call you 'Teacher,' as they do other Jewish teachers. I am the only one who is really your teacher. This means that you are all equal to each other, like brothers and sisters. ⁹Do not honor anyone on earth by addressing him as 'Father.' For God, your Father in heaven, is your only true father. ¹⁰Do not allow people to call you 'teacher.' For the Messiah is your only teacher. ¹¹Instead, everyone among you who wants God to consider him to be important must serve others as servants do. ¹²God will humble those who try to make themselves important. Those who humble themselves, God himself will make important."

¹³"You teachers of the law and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you, because you refuse to become one of God's people over whom he rules, and you also keep others from becoming God's people. It is as if you shut the door to a house and do not let people enter it."

^{14[1]} Because of this, God will punish you more severely ¹⁵“You teachers of the law and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You work hard to get even one non-Jewish person to believe what you teach. You even travel across seas and on land to distant places in order to do that. But as a result, when someone believes what you teach, you make that person deserve for God to punish them even more than you yourselves deserve.”

¹⁶“How terribly God will punish you Jewish leaders! You are like blind people who try to lead others. You say, ‘If someone swears to do something and asks the temple to be a witness to this oath like a person would witness it, and he does not do what he promised, he is not obligated by God to do it. But if a person asks the gold in the temple to be a witness to this oath like a person would do, then he must keep his promise.’ ¹⁷You are fools, and you are like people who are blind! The gold that is in the temple is only important because people use it in God’s temple. ¹⁸Also you say, ‘If someone swears to do something and asks the altar to be a witness to this oath, as a person would witness it, and he does not do what he promised, he is not obligated by God to do it. But if he asks what the priests are offering on the altar to be a witness to this oath as a person would do, then he must keep his promise.’ ¹⁹You are fools, and you are like people who are blind! What the priests offer on the altar is only important because they offer it on God’s altar. ²⁰So those who swear to do something and ask the altar to be a witness to the oath are also asking everything on the altar to witness to the oath. ²¹Likewise those who swear to do something and ask the temple to be a witness to the oath like a person would do, they are also asking the one who dwells in the temple to witness the oath. ²²If someone swears to do something and asks heaven to be a witness to the oath, they are asking the throne where God sits to be a witness, and so, they are also asking God himself, who sits on that throne, to be a witness.”

²³“You teachers of the law and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You give to God a tenth of the herbs you produce, such as mint, dill, and cumin. But you do not obey God’s laws that are more important. For example, you do not act justly toward other people, you do not act mercifully toward people, and you do not act as God wants you to act. It is good to give a tenth of your herbs to God, but you should also obey these other more important laws. ²⁴You leaders are like blind people who are trying to lead others. You are careful not to offend God in small ways. But you are not careful to offend God in great ways!

²⁵“You teachers of the law and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You make yourselves appear like good people to others by how you act. But you truly desire greed and taking what belongs to others. You are like dishes that are clean on the outside but are still dirty on the inside. ²⁶You blind Pharisees! First you must stop desiring to do evil things such as stealing from others. Then you will truly be able to act righteously and will be like a dish that is clean both outside and inside.”

²⁷“You men who teach the laws and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You are like tombs where people have buried dead people. Those tombs are painted white on the outside in order to look beautiful. Even though they look beautiful on the outside, inside they are full of dead people’s bones and things that would make a person unclean if they touch them. ²⁸You are like those tombs in that, when people look at you, they see you doing good deeds. But you are truly hypocrites, because you disobey God’s commands.”

²⁹“You men who teach the Jewish laws and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You rebuild the tombs of the prophets whom Jewish people killed long ago. You decorate the monuments that honor righteous people. ³⁰You say, ‘If we had lived when our ancestors lived, we would not have helped those who killed the prophets.’ ³¹When you say this, you admit that you are like your ancestors and would kill the prophets just as they did. ³²You are as ready to murder people as your ancestors were! ³³You wicked people are as dangerous as poisonous snakes! You certainly will not escape from God punishing you in hell! ³⁴This is why I will send you prophets, wise men, and people who will teach the law of Moses. You will kill some of them by nailing them to crosses, and you will kill some in other ways. You will whip some of them in the places where you worship and you will chase them from city to city. ³⁵So God will consider that you and your ancestors are guilty for killing all the righteous people who have ever lived on earth. This includes everyone from Adam’s son Abel, who was a righteous man, until one of the last prophets, Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom your ancestors killed in the holy place

between the temple and the altar. ³⁶What I say to you is true: You people who have witnessed what I have done God will punish for killing all those prophets!"

³⁷"O people of Jerusalem, you killed the prophets who lived long ago, and you who killed with stones others whom God had sent to you. Many times I have wanted to gather you together to protect you, as a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that. ³⁸So listen to this: Your city will become a place where no one lives. ³⁹Keep this in mind: You will see me again only when I return, when you say about me, 'God is truly pleased with this man who comes with God's authority!'"

23:14 ^[1]

Chapter 24

¹Jesus left the temple courtyard. As he was walking along, his apprentices came to him and began talking about how beautiful the temple buildings were. ²He said to them, "Certainly you are able to see these buildings! But what I say to you is true: An army will completely destroy them. They will throw down every stone in these buildings, so that no stone will remain on top of another stone."

³Later, as Jesus was sitting alone on the Mount of Olives, the apprentices came to him and asked him, "When will these things happen to the buildings of the temple? And what will God show us to demonstrate that you are about to come again and that this world is about to end?"

⁴Jesus replied, "Beware that no one deceives you about when it will happen! ⁵I say this because many people will come and say that they are me. They will say, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many people. ⁶Whenever people tell you about wars that are happening and about wars that could happen, do not let this trouble you. These things will definitely happen. But when they do happen, do not think that it is the end of the world! ⁷Groups who live in various countries will fight each other, and various governments will fight each other. There will also be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines. ⁸Yet, when these things happen, people will have only just begun to suffer. These first things that they suffer will be like the first pains a woman suffers who is about to bear a child. They will suffer much more after that.

⁹After these things happen, people who oppose you will take you away to suffer and die. Every group of people will hate you because you believe in me. ¹⁰Also, many people will stop believing in me because they suffer in this way. They will have their own fellow believers arrested and they will hate each other. ¹¹Many will come saying that they are prophets, but they will be lying, and they will deceive many people. ¹²Because more people will disobey God's laws, many believers will no longer love each other. ¹³But God will save all of you who continue to trust in me strongly until your life ends. ¹⁴Furthermore, believers will proclaim to all of the people of the world the good news that God is reigning as a king. Then the end of the world will come.

¹⁵During that time the detestable thing will enter the temple. It will defile the temple and cause people to abandon it. Daniel the prophet spoke and wrote about that long ago." (May everyone who reads this pay attention, because I am warning you.) ¹⁶"At that time those people who are in the region of Judea should flee to higher hills. ¹⁷Those people who are outside their houses should not enter their houses in order to get anything. ¹⁸Those who are working in a field should not return to their houses in order to get additional clothes. ¹⁹When this happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for those who are nursing their babies! ²⁰Pray that this painful time will not happen in winter, when it will be hard to travel, or on the Sabbath, the day of rest. ²¹People will suffer very severely when those things happen. People have never suffered that severely since God created the world until now, and no one will ever suffer like that again. ²²If God had not decided that he would shorten that time when people suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten that time because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen.

²³At that time people will falsely say that they are the Messiah. So at that time, if someone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!', or if someone says, 'Look, here he is!', do not believe it! ²⁴And some will appear claiming falsely to be prophets from God. Other will claim to be the Messiah. Then they will perform many kinds of miracles. They will even try to deceive the people whom God has chosen. ²⁵Do not forget that I have warned you about all this before it happens. ²⁶So if someone says to you, 'Look, the Messiah is in the wilderness!' do not go there. Likewise, if someone says to you, 'Look, he is in a secret room!' do not believe that person. ²⁷You should not believe them since, just as lightning flashes across the whole sky and people see it, in the same way everyone will see the Son of Man when he returns again. ²⁸It will be clear to everyone in the same way that, when you see vultures gathering, you know that an animal carcass is there.

²⁹After the time when people suffer like that, God will cause the sun to become dark, and the moon will not shine. God will cause all of the things in the sky to shake out of their places. ³⁰After that, everyone will see me, the Son of Man, appear in the sky. Then unbelieving people from all people groups on earth will wail because they will be afraid. They will see me, the Son of Man, coming on the clouds that are in the sky powerfully and gloriously. ³¹Then I will have an angel blast a trumpet to alert the whole world that I am coming. I will send out my angels to gather together the people whom God has chosen from everywhere, from the most remote places on earth.

³²Now I want you to learn something from this story about how fig trees grow and tell you about seasons. When the branches of a fig tree begin to sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³Similarly, when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time for me to return is very close. ³⁴What I say to you is true: All of these events will happen before all the people who have been with me have died. ³⁵You can be certain that these things that I have said will happen. One day God will destroy the earth and what is in the sky when he restores all of creation, but these things that I have told you will always be true.

³⁶But no one knows the exact time when I will return. The angels in heaven also do not know. Even I, God's Son, do not know. Only my Father knows. ³⁷⁻³⁹But when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just as people were doing at the time when Noah lived. At that time, people ate and drank as usual, and they got married as usual, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the great boat that God told Noah to build. But then the flood came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat. For they did not know what was coming. Similarly, the unbelieving people will not know when I, the Son of Man, will return. ⁴⁰When that happens, God will only take those who believe in him. For example, two people will be in the fields. God will take one of them up to heaven and the other person God will leave here to punish him. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding grain together. God will take one of them and leave the other one behind. ⁴²So, because you do not know what day your Lord will return to the earth, you need to be ready all the time. ⁴³Consider this: If the owner of a house knew at what time in the night a thief was coming, he would stay awake and prevent the thief from breaking in. ⁴⁴So be ready, because I, the Son of Man, will come again at a time when you do not expect me.

⁴⁵Think about what every faithful and wise servant is like. The house owner appoints one servant to supervise the other servants. He tells him to give them food at the proper times. Then he leaves on a long trip. ⁴⁶Happy is that servant whose master will find him doing these things when he comes. ⁴⁷What I say to you is true: The master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. ⁴⁸But a wicked servant might say to himself, 'The owner has been away for a long time, so he probably will not return soon and find out what I am doing.' ⁴⁹So he will begin to beat the other servants and eat and drink with those who are drunk. ⁵⁰If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. ⁵¹The master will punish that servant severely. He will put him where the hypocrites are put. In that place, the people cry and grind their teeth because they suffer very much."

Chapter 25

¹"At that future time when God reveals his rule from heaven, it will be like what happened to ten unmarried girls {in this story}. {At night} they took their oil lamps and went to {the place where they would} meet the bridegroom.

²Five of these girls were foolish, and {the other} five girls were wise. ³The foolish girls took their oil lamps, but they

did not take any {extra} olive oil with them {to keep their lamps lit}. ⁴But the wise girls took {extra} olive oil in their jars along with their oil lamps. ⁵The bridegroom delayed coming{, and it became late at night}. So all the girls became drowsy and then fell asleep. ⁶Around midnight someone shouted, 'Pay attention! The bridegroom {is arriving}! Go outside to meet him!' ⁷At that time all the girls woke up and adjusted their oil lamps to burn properly. ⁸The foolish girls said to the wise girls, 'Give us some of your olive oil, because {the fire of} our oil lamps is about to burn out!' ⁹The wise girls replied, '{No, because} there will certainly not be enough olive oil for our lamps and yours. Go to the sellers and buy some olive oil for yourselves!' ¹⁰But the bridegroom arrived while the foolish girls were on their way to buy olive oil. Then the wise girls, who were ready, went inside with him to the wedding celebration. Then someone closed the door {to that place}. ¹¹Later, the rest of the girls arrived {at that place} as well. They called {to the bridegroom}, 'Sir! Please open the door for us!' ¹²But he said to them, 'I tell you truly that I do not know you{, so I will not open the door for you}'! ¹³So, {in order that this does not happen to you,} stay ready because you do not know exactly when {I will return}."

¹⁴"{You must stay ready} because when God reveals his rule from heaven, it will be like a man who was about to go {on a long journey} to a different country. He called his servants together and entrusted them with some of what he owned. ¹⁵He gave each of them money according to their ability to use it. He gave one servant money equivalent to 30,000 days' wages. He gave another servant money equivalent to 12,000 days' wages, and he gave another servant money equivalent to 6,000 days' wages. Then he left at once on his journey to a different country. ¹⁶After he left, his servant who had received money equivalent to 30,000 days' wages used that money to gain another 30,000 days' wages. ¹⁷Similarly, the servant who had received money equivalent to 12,000 days' wages {used that money} to gain another 12,000 days' wages. ¹⁸But the servant who had received money equivalent to 6,000 days' wages went and dug a hole in the ground and hid it there {to keep it safe}.

¹⁹After a long time the servants' master returned. He called them together to find out what they had done with his money. ²⁰The servant who had received money equivalent to 30,000 days' wages brought 60,000 days' wages to his master. He said, 'Master, you entrusted me with 30,000 days' wages. Look, I have used it to gain another 30,000 days' wages!' ²¹His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and rejoice with me!'

²²The servant who had received money equivalent to 12,000 days' wages also came {to his master}. He said, 'Master, you entrusted me with 12,000 days' wages. Look, I have used it to gain another 12,000 days' wages!' ²³His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and rejoice with me!'

²⁴Then the servant who had received money equivalent to 6,000 days' wages also came {to his master}. He said, 'Master, I understand that you are a harsh man. {You are} just like a farmer who harvests crops that he did not plant. ²⁵So I was afraid of you. I went and buried your money in the ground. Look, here is your money!' ²⁶His master replied, 'You are an evil servant! You have been lazy! Suppose it is true that I am just like a farmer who harvests crops that I did not plant! ²⁷Then you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I would have gotten it back plus the interest it earned!' ²⁸So {the master said to his other servants,} 'Take the 6,000 days' wages from him and give it to the servant who has 60,000 days' wages! ²⁹To everyone who uses well what they have received, I will give even more, and they will have abundantly more. But from those who do not use well what they have received, I will take away from them even what they already have. ³⁰Furthermore, throw this useless servant into hell, which is an evil place where God does not give any spiritual blessings. There people will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will experience severe pain.'

³¹"When I, the Son of Man, come again and show how glorious I am and bring all my angels, I will sit {as king} on my majestic throne. ³²Angels will assemble people from every people group in front of me. Then I will separate those people into two groups, as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. ³³I will honor the righteous

people by putting them on my right side, but I will put the unrighteous people on my left side, {as a shepherd puts sheep on one side and goats on the other side}.

³⁴Then I, the King, will tell those {righteous people} on my right side, 'You people whom my Father has blessed, come! Come receive the benefits of those over whom I rule over. My Father has prepared these benefits for you since he made the world. ³⁵{These things belong to you,} because you fed me when I was hungry. You gave me something to drink when I was thirsty. You welcomed me to stay in your houses when I was a stranger in your town. ³⁶You gave me clothes when I did not have any. You took care of me when I was ill. You even visited me when I was in jail.'

³⁷Then those righteous people will reply, 'Lord, when were you hungry and we saw you and fed you? When were you thirsty and we gave you something to drink? ³⁸When were you a stranger {in our town} and we saw you and welcomed you {to stay} in our houses? When did you not have any clothes and we gave you some? ³⁹When were you sick or in jail and we visited you?'

⁴⁰Then I, the King, will reply to those righteous people, 'I tell you truly that you did for me whatever you did for even the least important one among these people who are as dear to me as brothers.'

⁴¹But then I will say to those {people} on my left side, 'Leave me! God has cursed you! {Go} into the fire that burns forever! God has prepared that fire for the devil and his {evil} angels. ⁴²{You deserve to go there,} because you did not feed me when I was hungry. You did not give me something to drink when I was thirsty. ⁴³You did not welcome me to stay in your houses when I was a stranger in your town. You did not give me clothes when I did not have any. You did not take care of me when I was ill and in jail.'

⁴⁴Then those people on my left side will reply, 'Lord, when were you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or without clothing or ill or in jail, and we did not provide you with what you needed?'

⁴⁵He will reply, "I tell you truly that you did not do for me whatever you did not do for even the least important one among these people of mine.'

⁴⁶Then those people on my left will go away to the place where God will punish them forever. However, the righteous people will go to the place where they will live forever {with God}."

Chapter 26

¹When Jesus had finished saying all those things, he told his apprentices, ²"You are aware that the Jewish Passover celebration will begin in two days. At that time someone will take me, the Son of Man, to people who will kill me by nailing me to a cross."

³At the same time, the chief priests and elders {who ruled} over the Jewish people assembled in the home of the high priest. His name was Caiaphas. ⁴{There} they planned how they could secretly arrest Jesus and have someone execute him. ⁵They kept saying among themselves, "{We must not arrest him} during the {Passover} celebration. {If we do it then,} the people might riot."

⁶Jesus {and his apprentices} were in the village of Bethany. They were in the home of Simon, {whom Jesus had healed} of a skin disease. ⁷A woman came to Jesus {while he was in the house}. She was carrying a beautiful stone jar that contained very valuable perfume. She poured all the perfume on Jesus' head while he was sitting at the table for a meal. ⁸When Jesus' apprentices saw {the woman do} that, they were very upset. They said {to one another}, "She wasted {that valuable perfume}! ⁹We could have sold it and gotten a lot of money for it! Then we could have given {that money} to poor people." ¹⁰Jesus knew what they were saying, so he told them, "Do not bother this woman! She has done a good thing to me. ¹¹There will always be poor people among you, {so you can help them whenever you want to}. However, I will not always be with you! ¹²When she poured this perfume on my body, {it was as if} she was preparing my body to be buried {after I die}. ¹³I tell you truly that in every place in the

entire world where people preach the good news {about me}, they will also speak about what this woman has done {for me}. {As a result,} people will always remember her."

¹⁴After {Jesus said} this, one of his 12 apprentices went to the chief priests. His name was Judas Iscariot. ¹⁵He asked {them}, "If I help you arrest Jesus, how much money will you give me?" {In response,} they counted out 30 silver coins {and gave them} to him. ¹⁶From that time on Judas started looking for a chance to help {the ruling priests} arrest Jesus.

¹⁷On the first day of the festival when Jewish people eat bread without yeast, Jesus' apprentices went to him and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover Celebration meal so that we can eat it?" ¹⁸Jesus told them, "Enter the city and go to a man {with whom I have previously arranged this}. Tell him, 'Our Teacher says that it is almost the time {that he told you about}. He will eat the Passover Celebration meal with us, his apprentices, at your house.'" ¹⁹So his apprentices did as Jesus told them to do. They went and prepared the Passover Celebration meal {in that man's house}.

²⁰When it was evening, Jesus sat at the table with his 12 apprentices {to eat the Passover Celebration meal}.

²¹While they ate, he told them, "I tell you truly that one of you is going to help {my enemies} arrest me." ²²The apprentices were very sad. They began to tell Jesus, one after the other, "Lord, I surely will not {betray you}!" ²³He replied, "The one who will help {my enemies} arrest me is the one {among you} who is dipping bread {into the sauce} in the dish along with me. ²⁴It is certain that I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what the prophets wrote about me in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, there will be terrible punishment for the man who betrays me! {In fact,} it would be better for him if he had never been born!" ²⁵Then Judas, the one who was going to betray him, said, "Teacher, surely it is not I!" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is you."

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took {a flat loaf of} bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread into pieces, gave it to his apprentices, and said, "Take and eat this bread. It is my body." ²⁷Then he took a cup {with wine in it} and thanked God {for it}. Then he gave it to his apprentices and said, "Drink {some wine} from this cup, each one of you. ²⁸{The wine in} this cup is my blood, which will soon flow from my body {when my enemies kill me}. With this blood I will confirm the agreement that God has made to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁹I want you to know this: I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again with you when my Father rules everywhere as king."

³⁰After they sang a song praising God, Jesus and his apprentices went out toward the Mount of Olives.

³¹Jesus then told them, "Tonight all of you will desert me because of {what will happen to} me! {This is certain to happen} because Zechariah wrote in the Scriptures {that God said}, 'I will kill the shepherd, and the sheep of his flock will scatter.' ³²But after {I have died and} God causes me to become alive again, I will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee and meet you there." ³³Peter replied, "All {of your other apprentices} may desert you because of {what will happen to} you, but I certainly will never desert you!" ³⁴Jesus replied to him, "I tell you the truth: This very night, before the rooster crows {at dawn}, you will say three times that you do not know me!" ³⁵Peter told him, "Even if I must die with you, I will never say that I do not know you!" All the rest of Jesus' apprentices also said the same thing.

³⁶Jesus then went with his apprentices to a place that people call Gethsemane. There he told his apprentices, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷He took Peter, James, and John, with him. Jesus became very sad and distressed. ³⁸Then he told those three apprentices, "I am very sorrowful. It is as if I were about to die! You men stay here with me and keep watch!" ³⁹After going a little farther, Jesus threw himself facedown on the ground. He prayed, "O my Father, if it is possible, rescue me so that I do not have to suffer now! But do not do what I want. Instead, do what you want!" ⁴⁰Then he returned to the three disciples and saw that they were sleeping. He {woke Peter up} and told him, "I am disappointed that you {men} were not able to keep watch with me for just a short time!" ⁴¹{And Jesus said to them,} "You want to do what I say, but you are not strong enough. Keep awake and pray so that you can resist when you are tempted!"

⁴²Jesus went away a second time. He prayed, "O my Father, if it is necessary for me to suffer, may what you want happen!"

⁴³When he returned to the three apprentices, he saw that they were asleep again. {This was} because {they were so sleepy that} they could not keep their eyes open. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away again. He prayed a third time, saying the same thing that he had prayed before. ⁴⁵Then he returned to the three apprentices. He woke them up and told them, "I am disappointed that you are still sleeping and resting! Look! The time for me to suffer is about to begin. Someone is about to help sinful men to arrest me, the Son of Man! ⁴⁶So get up! Let us go! Look! Here comes the one who is helping them to arrest me!"

⁴⁷While Jesus was still speaking, Judas arrived. He was one of the 12 apprentices. {He brought} with him a large crowd of people carrying swords and clubs. The chief priests and elders {who ruled} over the Jewish people had sent them {to arrest Jesus}. ⁴⁸Judas, who was helping Jesus' enemies to arrest him, had previously told this crowd, "The man whom I will kiss is the one you want. Arrest him!" ⁴⁹He immediately went to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus {on the cheek}. ⁵⁰Jesus told him, "Friend, do what you came here to do." Then the men who came with Judas grabbed Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹Suddenly, one of the men who was with Jesus pulled his sword {out of its sheath}. He struck someone who served the high priest and cut off that man's ear. ⁵²Jesus then told him, "Put your sword back in its sheath! Someone will kill with a sword all those who try to kill others with a sword! ⁵³Surely you know that if I asked my Father, he would immediately send more than 12 armies of angels to help me! ⁵⁴{But if I did that,} then the scriptures that the prophets have written {about what will happen to the Messiah} would not come true."

⁵⁵At that time Jesus told the groups of people {who were arresting him}, "You have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a bandit! Day after day I sat in the temple courtyard, teaching {the people}. You could have arrested me then! ⁵⁶But all this is happening in order that what the prophets wrote {about me in the Scriptures} may happen." Then all of Jesus' apprentices left him and ran away.

⁵⁷The men who had arrested Jesus took him to {the house where} Caiaphas, the high priest{, lived}. The men who taught the Jewish laws and the Jewish elders had {already} assembled there. ⁵⁸Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He went into the courtyard {of the house where} the high priest {lived}. He sat {there} with the men who guarded {the house of the high priest} in order to see what would happen.

⁵⁹The chief priests and all the rest of the Jewish council tried to find {people who would tell} lies about Jesus so that they could {convince the Romans to} execute him. ⁶⁰They did not succeed. Even though many people spoke lies about Jesus, {what they said was not useful}. Finally, two men came forward. ⁶¹They said, "This man said that he can destroy God's temple and rebuild it within three days." ⁶²Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply {to what they have said}? What do you say about all the things that they are saying in order to accuse you?" ⁶³But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I command you to tell us {the truth}, knowing that the one true God {is listening}: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" ⁶⁴Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say. But I will also say this to {all of} you: Some day you will see me, the Son of Man, ruling beside God, who is completely powerful. {You will} also {see me} coming down through the clouds in the sky!"

⁶⁵Then the high priest was so upset that he tore his outer garment. Then he said, "This man has insulted God! We certainly do not need anyone else to testify {against him}! You all surely heard how he insulted God! ⁶⁶What have you decided?" The Jewish leaders replied, "He deserves to be executed!" ⁶⁷Then some of them spit in Jesus' face, hit him {with their fists}, and slapped him. ⁶⁸They said, "{If you who claim to be} the Messiah are really a prophet, then tell us who hit you!"

⁶⁹Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from the region of Galilee!" ⁷⁰But while everyone there was listening, he denied having been with Jesus. He said, "I do not know what you are talking about!" ⁷¹Then he went out to the entrance {of the courtyard}. Another servant girl saw him and told the people who were standing nearby, "This man was with Jesus, that man from the

town of Nazareth.” ⁷²But Peter again denied having been with Jesus. He said, “May God punish me if I am lying! I do not even know that man!” ⁷³A short time later, the people who were standing there went up to Peter and said to him, “It is certain that you are one of those {who were with that man}. {We know this} because the way you speak proves that you are from the district of Galilee.” ⁷⁴Then Peter began to exclaim, “I do not know that man! For God knows that I am speaking truthfully, and may he punish me if I am lying!” Right then a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered the words that Jesus had spoken to him {when he said}, “Before the rooster crows {at dawn}, you will say three times that you do not know me.” Peter went out {of the courtyard} and cried with great sorrow.

Chapter 27

¹Early the next morning all the chief priests and elders {who ruled} over the Jewish people planned together in order to {persuade the Romans to} execute Jesus. ²Then their guards tied Jesus’ hands {again}. They took him {from Caiaphas} to Pilate, the {Roman} governor.

³Then Judas, the one who had helped Jesus’ enemies arrest him, realized that the chief priests and elders had decided that Jesus must die. So he regretted {helping them}. He brought the 30 silver coins back to the chief priests and elders {who had given them to him}. ⁴He said, “I have sinned. I have helped you condemn an innocent man to die.” They replied, “That means nothing to us! That is your problem!” ⁵So Judas took the money and threw it into the temple. Then he went away and hanged himself {so that he died}.

⁶The chief priests picked up the coins {Judas had thrown}. They said, “This is money that we paid for a man to die. Therefore, our laws prohibit us from putting this money into the temple treasury.” ⁷After discussing the matter {further}, they used that money to buy a field that people called the Potter’s Field. {They bought that field} in order to make it a place where they could bury strangers who died {in Jerusalem}. ⁸That is why people still call that place the “Field of Blood.” ⁹{By buying that field} they made these words come true that the prophet Jeremiah had written {in the Scriptures}: “They took the 30 silver coins, which were what the Israelites had decided that he was worth, ¹⁰and with that money they bought the potter’s field. {They did that} according to what the Lord had commanded me.”

¹¹Then Jesus stood in front of {Pilate,} the governor. Pilate asked him, “Do you say that you are the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered him, “You yourself have said so.”

¹²But when the chief priests and elders {of the Jews} accused Jesus {of doing various wrong things}, he did not reply. ¹³So Pilate told him, “You surely hear all these things they are accusing you of doing! {You should reply!”

¹⁴But Jesus did not say anything at all to him in response. As a result, the governor was very surprised.

¹⁵It was the governor’s custom {each year} during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He released {from prison} whomever the people wanted {him to release}. ¹⁶At that time the Romans were holding a well-known prisoner {in Jerusalem}. His name was Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the people assembled, Pilate asked them, “Which prisoner would you like me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus, whom some of you call the Messiah?” ¹⁸{He asked that question} because he was aware that the Jewish leaders had brought Jesus to him {only} because they were jealous {of Jesus}.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting on the seat where he usually pronounced verdicts, his wife sent this message to him: “Today I dreamed about that man, and it distressed me greatly. So do not pronounce that righteous man guilty!”

²⁰The chief priests and elders {of the Jews} convinced the groups of people to ask Pilate to release Barabbas, and {to command soldiers} to execute Jesus. ²¹The governor replied by asking them, “Which one of these two men do you want me to release for you?” They replied, “{We want you to release} Barabbas!” ²²Pilate asked them, “So what should I do with Jesus, whom some of you call the Messiah?” They all replied, “{Command your soldiers to} crucify him!” ²³Pilate replied, “No! He has not committed any crime!” But they shouted even louder, “{Command your soldiers to} crucify him!”

²⁴Pilate realized that he was not accomplishing anything. Rather, the people were starting to riot. So he took {a basin of} water and washed his hands while the group of people was watching. He said, "{By washing my hands, I have shown you that} I am not guilty of killing this man! That is your problem!" ²⁵And all the people replied, "May we and our descendants be responsible for killing this man!" ²⁶Then Pilate ordered the soldiers to release Barabbas to the group of people. But he ordered his soldiers to whip Jesus with leather straps into which they had fastened metal and bone pieces. Then he told the soldiers to take Jesus away to crucify him.

²⁷Pilate's soldiers then took Jesus into the government headquarters. Then the whole group of soldiers who were on duty there assembled around Jesus. ²⁸They pulled off his clothes and put a red robe on him {in order to pretend that he was a king}. ²⁹They {also} took some branches with thorns and wove them together to make a crown and put it on his head. They put in his right hand a stick {like a king's staff}. Then they knelt in front of him and ridiculed him by saying, "Hooray for the King who rules the Jews!" ³⁰They kept spitting on him. They took the stick {from him} and kept striking him on the head {with it}. ³¹When they had finished ridiculing him, they pulled the robe off of him and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away {from the government headquarters} in order to nail him to a cross.

³²While they were going out {of Jerusalem}, the soldiers saw a man from the city of Cyrene. His name was Simon. They forced him to carry the cross for Jesus. ³³They came to a place that people called Golgotha. That name means the "Place of the Skull." ³⁴Then they gave Jesus wine that they had mixed with bitter medicine so that he would drink it. After tasting it, Jesus refused to drink it. ³⁵After nailing Jesus to the cross, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling for them. ³⁶Then the soldiers sat down there to guard him {so that no one could rescue him}. ³⁷Above Jesus' head they fastened to the cross a sign on which someone had written why they had nailed him to the cross. {It said,} 'This man is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' ³⁸Along with Jesus they also nailed to other crosses two prisoners who were bandits. They nailed one to a cross at the right side of Jesus and one to a cross at the left side of Jesus. ³⁹The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads {at him}. ⁴⁰They said {to him}, "You said that you would destroy the temple and then you would build it again within three days. {If you could do that, then} rescue yourself! If you are really God's Son, then prove it by coming down from that cross!"

⁴¹Similarly, the chief priests, the men who taught the Jewish laws, and the elders ridiculed Jesus. They said {to each other}, ⁴²"People claim that he has saved others from trouble, but he cannot save himself! He claimed to be the king who rules the people of Israel. {If his words are true,} he should come down now from the cross! Then we will believe him!" ⁴³He says that he trusts in God, and that he is God's Son. So if God is pleased with him, God should rescue him now!" ⁴⁴Similarly, the two bandits whom the soldiers nailed on crosses beside Jesus insulted him as well.

⁴⁵At noon the whole land became dark. {It stayed dark} until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁶At about three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ⁴⁷When some of the people standing there heard {him say} that, they misunderstood it and said, "He is calling for the prophet Elijah!" ⁴⁸At that moment one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with cheap wine. Then he put the sponge on {the tip of} a reed and held it up to try to get Jesus to suck out the wine that was in it. ⁴⁹But the other people there said, "Wait! Let us see if Elijah comes to rescue him!" ⁵⁰Then after Jesus shouted loudly again, he voluntarily died. ⁵¹Just then the heavy, thick curtain {that closed off the Most Holy Place} in the temple split into two pieces from top to bottom. God also shook the earth and broke apart {some} rocks. ⁵²God caused burial chambers to open up. He also caused the dead bodies of many of his people to become alive again. ⁵³Those people came out of the burial chambers, and they went into Jerusalem after Jesus became alive again. Many people saw them there.

⁵⁴When the centurion {who was commanding the soldiers} and those soldiers who were guarding Jesus with him felt the earthquake and saw all the other things that happened, they were terrified. They exclaimed, "Certainly, this Jesus was God's Son!"

⁵⁵Many women were there, watching {what happened} from farther back. These women had accompanied Jesus from the district of Galilee in order to provide him with what he needed. ⁵⁶Among these women were Mary from the town of Magdala, another Mary who was the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John.

⁵⁷When evening was near, a rich man came there. His name was Joseph and he was from the city of Arimathea. He also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸Joseph went to Pilate and asked him to allow him to take the body of Jesus {and bury it}. Pilate ordered {his soldiers} to give him the body {so he could take it away}. ⁵⁹So Joseph {and others} took the body. They wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. ⁶⁰Then they put Jesus' body into Joseph's own newly made burial chamber that workers had cut into a rock cliff. Then they rolled a huge flat stone in front of the entrance to the burial chamber. Then they left. ⁶¹Mary from the town of Magdala and the other woman whose name was Mary were sitting there, facing the burial chamber.

⁶²The next day was the Jewish day of rest. {On that day} the chief priests and some of the Pharisees assembled {and met} with Pilate. ⁶³They said, "Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive, he said that on the third day {after he died}, God would cause him to become alive again." ⁶⁴So {we ask you to} order your soldiers to secure the burial chamber for three days. If you do not do that, his apprentices may go there and steal the body. Then they will tell the people that God caused him to become alive again after he had died. If they deceive the people {in this way}, then it will be worse than the first {way he deceived people}." ⁶⁵Pilate told them, "Take some soldiers. Go {to the burial chamber and} secure it as best as you can." ⁶⁶So they went {to the burial chamber and} secured it by putting a seal on the huge flat stone {in front of the entrance to the burial chamber}. They also left some soldiers there to guard {the burial chamber}.

Chapter 28

¹When the Sabbath ended at dawn on Sunday morning, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other woman whose name was Mary went to look at Jesus' burial chamber. ²Suddenly there was a powerful earthquake because an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. He went {to the burial chamber and} rolled the large stone away {from the burial chamber's entrance}. Then he sat on the stone. ³{The angel was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow.} ⁴The guards trembled because they were terrified of the angel, and then they fell down as if they were dead.

⁵The angel told the two women, "You should not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, whom people nailed to a cross. ⁶{But} he is not here {anymore}, because God has caused him to become alive again! {It happened} just as Jesus told you it would! Come and look at the place {in the burial chamber} where his body lay! ⁷Then go quickly and tell his apprentices, 'God has caused him to become alive again after he had died! Listen! He will go ahead of you to the region of Galilee. You will see him there.' Listen to what I have told you!"

⁸So the two women left the burial chamber quickly. They were afraid but also very joyful. They ran {to where his disciples were staying} in order to tell them {what had happened}. ⁹Suddenly Jesus appeared to them. He said, "Greetings to you!" The two women came close to him. They {knelt down and} clasped his feet {to honor him}, and they worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "You should not be afraid! Go and tell my apprentices to go to the region of Galilee. They will see me there."

¹¹While the two women were going {to Jesus' apprentices}, some of the soldiers who had been guarding Jesus' burial chamber went into Jerusalem. They reported to the chief priests everything that had happened {at the burial chamber}. ¹²So the chief priests and elders {of the Jews} assembled and decided what they would do. They gave the soldiers a lot of money {as a bribe}. ¹³They said, "Tell people that his apprentices came during the night and stole his body while you were asleep. ¹⁴If the governor hears about this, we ourselves will convince him not to punish you. So you will not have to worry." ¹⁵So the soldiers {who had guarded Jesus' burial chamber} took the money and did what the chief priests and elders had told them to do. And people are still telling this story among the Jews.

¹⁶Later Jesus' 11 apprentices went to the region of Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him {there}, they worshiped him. However, some of them were not sure that it was really Jesus. ¹⁸Then Jesus came close to them and said, "My Father has authorized me to rule over everything and everyone. ¹⁹So go and proclaim my message to people from every people group so that they may become my disciples. Baptize them to show that they have devoted themselves to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And indeed, I will always be with you, until the time when the world ends."

Mark

Chapter 1

¹This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, who is the Son of God. ²This good news began just as the prophet Isaiah said that it would when he wrote long ago, "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will make people ready for when you come. ³He will be a voice calling out in the desolate place to anyone who hears him, saying,

'Make yourselves ready to welcome the Lord. Get everything organized for his coming.'"

⁴The messenger that Isaiah wrote about was John. People called him "The Baptizer." John was in a desolate area near the Jordan River. He was baptizing people and proclaiming to them that if they repent, then he will baptize them, and God will forgive their sins. ⁵A great number of people from the region of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to the wilderness to hear John speak. Many of those who heard him agreed that they had sinned. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River. ⁶John wore clothes made of camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that desolate area. ⁷He was preaching, "Very shortly one will come who is very great. I am nothing compared to him. I am not even worthy to stoop down and untie his sandals. ⁸I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹During the time when John was preaching, Jesus came from Nazareth, a town in the Galilee region. He went to where John was preaching, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven tearing open and the Spirit of God descending on him. The Spirit of God came down from heaven like a dove. ¹¹Then God spoke from heaven and said, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you." ¹²Then the Spirit of God sent Jesus out into the desolate area. ¹³Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. During that time, Satan was tempting him. There were wild animals in that place, and angels were taking care of him.

¹⁴Later, after the governor, Herod Antipas, put John the Baptizer in prison, Jesus went to the Galilee region. In Galilee, he was preaching God's good news. ¹⁵He was saying, "The time has come at last. God will soon show that he is king. Repent and believe the good news."

¹⁶One day while Jesus was walking along the coast of the sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon and Simon's brother, Andrew. They were casting their fishing net into the sea to catch fish. They earned money by catching and selling fish. ¹⁷Then Jesus said to them, "Just like you have been gathering fish, come with me, and I will teach you how to gather people to be my disciples." ¹⁸Immediately after Jesus said this, they stopped working, and they went with him. ¹⁹After they had gone on a little further, Jesus saw two other men, James and James' brother, John. They were the sons of a man named Zebedee. They were all in a boat fixing their fishing nets. ²⁰As soon as Jesus saw them, he told them to come with him. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat with his servants, and they went away with Jesus.

²¹Jesus, along with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, went into the nearby town of Capernaum. There, Jesus began teaching in the Jewish meeting place on the Sabbath. ²²Those who were listening were amazed at the way he taught. He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught. ²³In the Jewish preaching place where Jesus taught, there was a man who was controlled by an evil spirit. The man with the evil spirit began shouting, ²⁴"Hey! Jesus, from Nazareth! We evil spirits have nothing to do with you! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy One from God!" ²⁵Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Be quiet and come out of that man!" ²⁶The evil spirit shook the man violently. It screamed loudly, and then it came out of the man and left. ²⁷All

the people who were in the synagogue were amazed. As a result, they discussed this among themselves, saying, "This is something we have never seen before! Not only does he teach in a new and authoritative way, but he also commands the evil spirits, and they obey him!" ²⁸The people very soon told many others throughout the entire Galilee region what Jesus had done.

²⁹After they left the Jewish preaching place, Jesus, Simon, and Andrew, along with James and John, went directly to the house of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed because she was feeling sick; she had a fever. Right away someone told Jesus about her being sick. ³¹Jesus went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. She immediately recovered from the fever and began serving them.

³²That evening, after the sun had gone down, people from the surrounding area brought to Jesus many others who were sick and those whom evil spirits controlled. ³³It seemed as though everyone who lived in the town had gathered at the doorway of Simon's house. ³⁴Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases. He also forced many evil spirits to come out from people. He did not allow the evil spirits to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Holy One from God.

³⁵Jesus got up very early the next morning while it was still dark. He left the house and went away from the town to a place where there were no people. Then he prayed. ³⁶Simon and his companions searched for him. ³⁷When they found him they said, "Everyone in town is looking for you." ³⁸Jesus said to them, "We need to go to the other towns in this region so that I can preach there as well. This is the reason I came here." ³⁹So they went throughout Galilee region. As they went, Jesus would preach in the Jewish preaching places and force evil spirits to come out from people.

⁴⁰One day a man who had a bad skin disease called leprosy came to Jesus. He knelt down in front of Jesus and pleaded with him, saying, "Please make me clean, because you are able to make me clean if it is your will!" ⁴¹Jesus felt compassion for him. He reached out his hand and touched the man. Then he said to him, "It is my will to heal you, so be healed!" ⁴²Immediately the man was healed! He was no longer a leper! ⁴³Jesus gave the man a warning as he was sending him away, ⁴⁴saying, "Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go to a priest, and show yourself to him so that he may examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Then make the offering that Moses commanded for people whom God has healed from leprosy. This will be the testimony to the community that you no longer have leprosy." ⁴⁵The man did not follow Jesus' instruction. He began telling many people about how Jesus had healed him. As a result, Jesus was no longer able to enter towns publicly, because the crowds of people would surround him. Instead, he remained outside the towns in places where no one lived. But people kept coming to him from all over that region.

Chapter 2

¹After some days had passed, Jesus returned to the town of Capernaum. People spread the news quickly to others that Jesus had returned and was in a certain house. ²Soon a great number of people gathered where Jesus was staying. The number was so great that the house was full. There was no longer space to stand, not even around the doorway. Jesus spoke God's message to them. ³Some people came to the house bringing to Jesus a man who was paralyzed. Four men carried him on a sleeping pad. ⁴They were not able to bring the man close to Jesus because of the crowd that had gathered. So, they went up on the roof of the house and made a big hole in the roof above Jesus. They lowered the paralyzed man on his sleeping pad through the hole in front of Jesus. ⁵After Jesus perceived that the men believed that he could heal this man, he said to the paralyzed man, "My child, I have forgiven your sins!" ⁶Some men who taught the Jewish laws were sitting there. They started thinking to themselves, ⁷"Who does this man think he is, talking like that? He insults God by saying that! No person can forgive sins—only God can!" ⁸Right away, Jesus knew within himself what they were thinking. He said to them, "Why are you thinking that I don't have the right to forgive sins? ⁹Which would be easier for me to say to the paralyzed man, 'I have forgiven your sins' or 'Stand up! Take your sleeping pad and walk'? ¹⁰I will demonstrate to you that God has given the Son of Man authority on earth to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, ¹¹"Stand up! Pick up your

sleeping pad and go home!" ¹²The man stood up immediately. He picked up the sleeping pad, and he walked out of the house while all the people there were watching. They were all amazed, and they praised God and said, "We have never before seen anything like what happened just now!"

¹³Jesus left the town of Capernaum and walked again along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd came to him, and he taught them. ¹⁴As he was walking, he saw a man named Levi, whose father's name was Alpheus. He was sitting at his workplace, where he collected taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple." He got up and went with Jesus. ¹⁵Later, Jesus was eating a meal in Levi's house. Many men who collected taxes—and others whom the religious leaders considered to be sinners—were eating with Jesus and his disciples. There were many people like this who were going everywhere with Jesus. ¹⁶Men who taught the Jewish laws and who were members of the Pharisee sect saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and men who collected taxes. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does he eat and drink with sinners and men who collect taxes?" ¹⁷After Jesus heard what they were asking, he said to the men who taught the Jewish laws, "Healthy people do not need a doctor. On the contrary, it is those who are sick who need a doctor. I did not come to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me, but those who know that they have sinned."

¹⁸Now at this time, the followers of John the Baptizer and some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect were abstaining from food, as they often did. Some men came to Jesus and asked him, "The disciples of John and of the Pharisees often abstain from food. Why do your students not abstain from food?" ¹⁹Jesus said to them, "When a man is marrying a woman, his friends will certainly not abstain from food while he is still with them. The wedding is a time of feasting and celebrating with the groom. It is not a time for abstaining from food, especially while the groom is with them. ²⁰But someday, the groom will be taken away from his friends. Then in those days, they will abstain from food."

²¹Jesus went on to say to them, "People do not sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment in order to mend a hole. If they did, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink, and the new piece of cloth would tear off more of the old cloth. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! ²²Similarly, people do not put new wine into old animal-skin bags to store it. If they did, the new wine would burst the skin bags because they would not stretch when the wine ferments and expands. As a result, both the wine and the skin bags would be ruined! On the contrary, people must put new wine into new skin bags!"

²³On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was walking through some grain fields with his students. As they were walking along through the grain fields, Jesus' disciples were plucking some of the heads of grain. ²⁴Some of the Pharisees saw what they were doing and said to Jesus, "Look at this! They are breaking the Jewish law concerning the day of rest. Why are they doing that?" ²⁵Jesus said to them, "Have you never read the scriptures concerning King David and the men who were with him, when they were hungry? ²⁶During the time Abiathar was high priest, King David entered the house of God and asked for some bread. The high priest gave him some of the bread that had been on display before God. According to our laws, only the priests could eat that bread! But David ate some of it. Then he also gave some of it to the men who were with him." ²⁷Jesus said to them further, "God made the day of rest for the sake of mankind. He did not make the day of rest to be a burden on mankind. ²⁸So, to be clear, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the day of rest!"

Chapter 3

¹On another Jewish day of rest, Jesus again went into a Jewish meeting place. There was a man there whose hand was shriveled. ²Some men of the Pharisee sect watched him carefully to see whether he would heal the man on the day of rest, for they wanted to be able to accuse him of doing something wrong. ³Jesus said to the man whose hand was shriveled, "Stand up here in front of everyone!" {So the man stood up.} ⁴Then Jesus said to the people, "Do the laws that God gave Moses permit people to do good on the day of rest, or to do evil? Do the laws permit us to save a person's life on the day of rest, or permit us to refuse to help a person and let them die?" But they did not reply. ⁵He looked around at them angrily. He was very disappointed that they were stubborn {and not willing to help the man}. So he said to the man, "Extend your hand!" When the man extended his shriveled hand, it became

healthy again! ⁶The Pharisees left the meeting place. They immediately met with some of the Jews who supported Herod Antipas, who ruled the region of Galilee. Together they planned how they could kill Jesus.

⁷Jesus and his disciples left that town and went to an area further along the Sea of Galilee. A great crowd of people followed him. The people that followed him came from the regions of Galilee and Judea, ⁸from the city of Jerusalem, from the region of Idumea, from the region on the east side of the Jordan River, and from the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. They all came to Jesus because they had heard about what he was doing.

⁹⁻¹⁰Because he had healed many people, many other people who had various illnesses pushed forward in order to touch him. They believed that if they only touched him, that touch would make them well. So he told his disciples that they should get a small boat ready for him in order that the crowd would not crush him when they pushed forward to touch him. ¹¹Whenever the evil spirits saw Jesus, they caused the people whom they controlled to fall down in front of Jesus and call out to him, "You are the Son of God!" ¹²Jesus commanded the evil spirits strongly that they must not tell anyone who he was.

¹³Jesus went up into the hills. There, he summoned those that he wanted to go with him, and they followed him.

¹⁴He appointed twelve men to travel with him, whom also he would send out to preach. He called them his special representatives. ¹⁵He also gave them power to be able to force evil spirits to come out from people. ¹⁶And Jesus appointed 12 men. He appointed Simon and gave him a new name, Peter. ¹⁷And along with Peter, Jesus also appointed James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James. He gave both of them the new name, 'Men Who Are Like Thunder' because of their fiery zeal; ¹⁸and he appointed Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, and James who was the son of Alphaeus; and he appointed Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot (who later caused him to get arrested).

²⁰Jesus and his apprentices went to a house. Again a crowd gathered where he was staying. Many people crowded around him. He and his apprentices did not even have time to eat. ²¹When his relatives heard about this, they went to take him home with them, because some people were saying that he was insane.

²²Some men who taught the Jewish laws came downhill from the city of Jerusalem. They heard that Jesus was forcing evil spirits to come out of people. So they were telling people, "Beelzebul, who rules the evil spirits, controls Jesus. He is the one who gives Jesus the power to force evil spirits out from people!" ²³So Jesus summoned those men over to himself. Jesus spoke to them in parables and said, "How can Satan expel Satan? ²⁴If people who live in the same country are fighting against one another, their country will cease to be a united country. ²⁵And if people who live in the same house fight each other, they will certainly not remain united as one family. ²⁶Similarly, if Satan and his evil spirits were fighting one another, instead of remaining strong, he would become powerless. ²⁷No one can go into the house of a strong man and take his possessions away from him unless he first ties up the strong man. Only then will he be able to steal the things in that man's house." ²⁸Jesus also said, "Consider this carefully! People may sin in many ways, and they may speak evil about God, yet God can still forgive them. ²⁹But if anyone speaks evil words about the Holy Spirit, God will never forgive them. That person is eternally guilty of sin."

³⁰Jesus told them this because they were saying, "An evil spirit is controlling him!"

³¹Jesus' mother and younger siblings came to where Jesus was teaching. While they stood outside, they sent someone inside to tell Jesus to come to them. ³²A crowd was sitting around Jesus. Some of them said to him, "Listen! Your mother and younger siblings are outside. They want to see you." ³³Jesus asked them, "Who is my mother? Who are my siblings?" ³⁴After he looked around at those who sat with him, he said, "Look here! You are my mother and my siblings. ³⁵For those who do what God wants are my brother, my sister, or my mother!"

Chapter 4

¹Another time Jesus began to teach people alongside the Sea of Galilee. As he was teaching, a very large crowd gathered around him. Because {the crowd was so big}, he got into a boat and pushed out onto the water. The

crowd listened to his teaching from the shore of the sea. ²He taught them by using simple stories with a lesson in them. He told them this: ³"Here I am now. A man went out to his field to plant some seeds. ⁴As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵Other seed fell on ground where there was little soil but lots of rocks. Very soon the seedling appeared through the soil because the soil was not very deep. ⁶Later that day, after the sun shone on the young plant, it got dried out and withered because the shallow roots could not find water among the rocks in the ground. ⁷As he sowed, another seed fell on ground that contained roots of thorny plants. The seedling grew, but the thorny plants also grew up and crowded out the good plant. So the plant produced no grain. ⁸But as he sowed, another seed fell on good soil. As a result, it sprouted, grew large, and then produced plenty of grain. Some of these plants bore 30 times as much as the seed that the man had planted. Some bore 60 times as much. Some bore 100 times as much." ⁹Then Jesus said, "Whoever is willing to listen, listen to what I say."

¹⁰Later, when only the 12 apprentices and other close followers were with him, they asked him about the parables.

¹¹He said to them, "To you I have explained the message about how God reveals himself as king, but to the others I have spoken in parables.

¹²When they see what I am doing, they will not learn {why I do it}.

When they hear what I say, they will not understand what it means.

This is so that they may not repent,

and God may not forgive them."

¹³Jesus also said to his apprentices, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand when I teach you other parables? ¹⁴In the parable that I told you, the man who sows seeds represents someone who teaches God's message to others. ¹⁵Some people are like the instance when the seeds fell along the path. When they hear God's message, Satan comes at once and causes them to forget what they have heard. ¹⁶Some people are like the seed which the farmer sows upon the rocky soil. When they hear God's message, they immediately accept it with joy. ¹⁷But, they did not have their own strong roots, and they lack the ability to endure. Because of this, when people cause them to suffer because of the message of God, they quickly stop believing. ¹⁸Some people are like the soil that has thorny weeds in it. Those people hear God's message ¹⁹but only care about earthly things and becoming rich, and they forget God's message. These things, filling the person's life, choke the message which they received, and the person becomes unable to bear fruit. ²⁰But some people are like the seed that was sown on the good soil. They hear God's message, and they accept it, and they believe it, and they do the things that God wants them to do. They are like the good plants that produced 30, 60, or 100 grains."

²¹He told the apprentices another parable: "People certainly do not light an oil lamp and then bring it in the house in order to put something over it to cover its light. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that the light will shine.

²²Similarly, things that were hidden—one day everyone will know them—and the things that have happened in secret—one day everyone will see them in full light. ²³If you want to understand this, you should consider carefully what you have just heard."

²⁴"Consider carefully what you hear me say to you, for God will let you understand to the same degree that you consider what I say. He will let you understand even more than that. ²⁵For if a person has some understanding, he will receive even more. But if a person does not have understanding, even what little he has, he will lose."

²⁶Jesus also said, "When God begins to show himself as king, it is like a man who has scattered seed on the ground.

²⁷Afterwards he slept each night and rose up each day without worrying about the seeds. During that time the seeds sprouted and grew in a way that he did not understand. ²⁸The ground produced the crop on its own. First the stalks appeared. Then the heads appeared. Then the full kernels in the heads appeared. ²⁹As soon as the grain was ripe, he sent people to harvest it, because it was time to harvest the grain."

³⁰Jesus told them another story with a lesson. He said, "When God begins to show himself as king, what is it like? What word picture can I use to describe it?" ³¹It is like mustard seeds, which are the smallest seeds that are planted in the ground, smaller than any other seed upon the earth. ³²After they are planted, they grow up and become larger than the other garden plants. They put out big branches so that birds are able to make nests in their shade."

³³Jesus used many parables when he talked to the people about God's message. He told them as much as they were able to understand. ³⁴He always used stories with lessons when he spoke to them. But he explained all the parables to his own apprentices when he was alone with them.

³⁵On that same day, when the sun was setting, Jesus said to his apprentices, "Let us cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." ³⁶Jesus was already in the boat, so they left the crowd of people and sailed away. Other people also went along with them in their boats. ³⁷A strong wind came up and the waves started coming into the boat! The boat was in danger of being filled with water. ³⁸Jesus was in the back part of the boat. He was sleeping with his head on a cushion. So the apprentices woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Are you not concerned that we are about to die?" ³⁹So Jesus got up and rebuked the wind, and he spoke to the lake, "Be quiet! Be still!" The wind stopped blowing, and then the Sea of Galilee became very calm. ⁴⁰He said to the apprentices, "Why are you afraid? Do you not yet believe that I can protect you?" ⁴¹They were terrified. They said to one another, "Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Chapter 5

¹Jesus and his apprentices arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. People called the Gerasenes lived near the place where they landed. ²When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a man came out from the tombs in a cemetery. Evil spirits controlled the man. ³The man was coming out of the cemetery because he lived among the tombs. The people at times tried to restrain him. They could not restrain him, not even with {metal} chains. ⁴Whenever they used chains and shackles, the man would break them apart. He was so strong that no one was able to control him. ⁵Day and night the man would spend his time among the places in the cemetery where people were buried. In the hill-country he would scream out loud and cut himself with sharp stones. ⁶When he saw Jesus in the distance getting out of the boat, he ran over to him and knelt before him. ⁷⁻⁸The demon cried out in a loud voice, "Leave me alone, Jesus, Son of the Most High God! Swear by the name of God that you will not torture me!" The demon said this because Jesus was saying to him, "Go out from that man, unclean spirit!" ⁹Jesus asked the unclean spirit, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion because there are many of us evil spirits in this man." ¹⁰Then the evil spirits kept asking Jesus fervently that he not send them out of the region. ¹¹At the same time, a large herd of pigs was grazing nearby on the hillside. ¹²So the evil spirits pleaded with Jesus saying, "Allow us to go to the pigs in order that we might enter them!" ¹³Jesus permitted them to do that. So the evil spirits left the man and entered the pigs. The herd, which numbered about 2,000, rushed down the steep hill into the Sea of Galilee, where they drowned.

¹⁴The men who were tending the pigs ran and reported in the town and the countryside what had happened. Many people {from those places} went to see for themselves what had happened. ¹⁵All of the people came to the place where Jesus was. Then they saw the man whom evil spirits had previously controlled. He was sitting there with clothes on and no longer acting like evil spirits controlled him. They were afraid when they saw all this. ¹⁶The people who had seen what Jesus did told those who had come from the town and from the countryside. They told the people about what had happened to the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled. They also described what had happened to the pigs. ¹⁷Then the people pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸As Jesus got in the boat to leave, the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled begged Jesus, "Please let me go with you!" ¹⁹But Jesus did not let the man go with him. Instead, he said to him, "Go home to your family and tell them everything the Lord has done for you, and tell them how he has been so kind to you." ²⁰So the man went and traveled around the Ten Towns in that region. He told people everything Jesus had done for him. All the people who heard what the man said were amazed.

²¹After Jesus crossed again in a boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. ²²One of the men who was in charge of a Jewish meeting place, whose name was Jairus, came there. When he saw Jesus, he knelt at his feet. ²³Then he pleaded with Jesus earnestly, "My daughter is sick and nearly dead! Please come to my house and place your hands on her. Heal her and keep her alive!" ²⁴So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed him, and many pushed in close to him. ²⁵There was a woman in the crowd who had a bleeding disorder. She had been bleeding every day for 12 years. ²⁶She suffered many times by the hand of many doctors. At the same time, she had spent all of her money and did not get better. Instead, she got worse. ²⁷⁻²⁸When she heard that Jesus healed people, she joined the crowd which was following him. As she got near him, she touched his garment. She was thinking, "If I only touch his clothes, it will heal me." ²⁹At once her bleeding stopped. At the same time, she felt within her body that Jesus cured her of her illness. ³⁰Jesus also immediately sensed within himself that his power had healed someone. So he turned around in the crowd and then he asked, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹His apprentices replied, "You can see that many people are pushing close to you! Probably many people have touched you! So why do you ask, 'Who touched me?'" ³²But Jesus kept looking around in order to see the one who had touched him. ³³The woman was very afraid and trembling, because she knew that when she touched Jesus, he healed her. She knelt before him and told him what she had done. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, because you have believed that I could heal you, I have now healed you. Be at peace, knowing that I permanently healed you from your illness."

³⁵While Jesus was still speaking to that woman, some people arrived who had come from Jairus' house. They said to Jairus, "Your daughter has now died. So there is no need to bother the teacher any longer in bringing him to your house." ³⁶But when Jesus heard what these men said, he said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid that your daughter is dead! Just believe that she will live!" ³⁷Then he allowed only his three closest apprentices, Peter, James, and John, to go with him to the house. He did not allow any other people to go with him. ³⁸After they arrived near Jairus' house, Jesus saw that the people there were in turmoil. They were weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹He entered the house, and then he said to the people there, "Why are you so upset and crying? The child is not dead, but only sleeping." ⁴⁰The people laughed at him because they knew that she was dead. He sent all the other people outside the house. Then he took the child's father and mother and the three apprentices who were with him, and they went into the room where the child was lying. ⁴¹He took hold of the child's hand and said to her in her own language, "Talitha koum!" That means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴²At once the girl got up and walked around. (It was not surprising that she could walk, because she was 12 years old.) When this happened, all who were present were greatly amazed. ⁴³Jesus ordered them strictly, saying, "Do not tell anyone about what I have done!" Then he told them to give the girl something to eat.

Chapter 6

¹Jesus left the city of Capernaum and went to the place of his birth, Nazareth. His apprentices went with him. ²On the Jewish day of rest, he entered the Jewish preaching place and taught the people. Many who were listening to him were amazed. They wondered where he gained all his wisdom and the power to perform miracles. ³They said, "He is just an ordinary carpenter! We know him and his family! We know Mary his mother! We know his younger brothers James, Joses, Judas, and Simon! And his younger sisters also live here with us!" So they were troubled by his teachings. ⁴Jesus said to them, "It is certainly true that people honor prophets in other places, but not in their hometowns! Even their relatives and the people who live in their own houses do not honor them!"

⁵Although he healed a few sick people there by the laying on of hands, he was not able to perform any other miracle. ⁶He was amazed that so few people believed in him, but he was going through their villages and teaching them.

⁷One day, Jesus called the 12 apprentices together. He then told them that he was going to send them out two by two to teach people in various towns. He also gave them power to force evil spirits out of the people whom they controlled. ⁸⁻⁹He also instructed them to wear simple sandals and to take along a walking stick when they were traveling. He told them not to take food or a bag in which to put supplies or any money for their journey. He also

did not allow them to take an extra tunic. ¹⁰He also instructed them, "If someone invites you to stay in his house, live in their house until you leave that town. ¹¹Wherever the people do not welcome you and wherever the people do not listen to you, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that place. By doing that, you will be testifying that they {did not welcome you or your message}." ¹²So after the apprentices went out to various towns, they were preaching in order that people might repent {of their sins}. ¹³They were also forcing many evil spirits out from people, and they were anointing many sick people with olive oil and healing them.

¹⁴Now King Herod Antipas heard about what Jesus was doing, because many people were talking about him. Some people were saying about Jesus, "He must be John the Baptizer! He has risen from the dead! That is why he has the power to perform these miracles!" ¹⁵Others were saying about Jesus, "He is the ancient prophet Elijah, whom God promised to send back again." Others were saying about Jesus, "No, he is a different prophet, like one of the other prophets who lived long ago." ¹⁶After hearing what the people were saying, King Herod Antipas himself said, "The man performing those miracles must be John the Baptizer! I commanded my soldiers to cut off his head, but he is alive again!" ¹⁷For previously, King Herod had arrested John and thrown him in prison. He did this because Herod married his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. ¹⁸Herod put John in prison because he was saying to Herod, "God's law does not allow you to marry the wife of your brother." ¹⁹But because Herodias wanted to get further revenge on John, she wanted someone to execute him. But she could not do that, because while John was in prison, Herod kept John safe from her. ²⁰Herod did this because he respected John, because he knew that he was a righteous man who devoted himself to God. Whenever Herod listened to John, Herod became very disturbed, but he liked to listen to John. ²¹The chance for Herodias to see John put to death came when they honored Herod on his birthday. He invited the most important government officials, the most important army leaders, and the most important men in the district of Galilee to eat and celebrate with him. ²²While they were eating, Herodias' daughter came into the room and danced for the king and his guests. She pleased King Herod and his guests so much that he said to her, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you!" ²³He also promised to her, "Whatever you ask, I will give it to you! I will give you up to half of what I own and rule, if you ask for it." ²⁴After this, the daughter went to her mother, Herodias, and told her what King Herod had said. She asked her mother, "What should I ask for?" Her mother replied, "Ask the king to give you the head of John the Baptizer!" ²⁵The girl hurried back to the room and went right to the king with her request. She said, "I want you to command someone to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it to me right now on a serving plate!" ²⁶The king became very distressed when he heard what she asked for because he knew John was a very righteous man. But he could not refuse what she requested, because he had promised that he would give her anything she asked for, and his guests had heard him promise. ²⁷So the king at once ordered someone to go and cut off John's head and bring it to the girl. Then that man went to the prison and cut off John's head. ²⁸He put it on a serving plate, brought it back, and gave it to the girl. The girl took it to her mother. ²⁹After John's apprentices heard what happened, they went to the prison and took John's body; then they buried it.

³⁰Those whom Jesus had chosen to represent him returned from the places to which he had sent them. They reported to him what they had done and what they had taught to people. ³¹He said to them, "Come with me to a place where no people are living, in order that we can be alone and rest a little while!" He said this because many people were continually coming to them and going away again, with the result that Jesus and his apprentices did not have time to eat or do anything else. ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a place where no people were living. ³³But many people saw them leaving. They also recognized that they were Jesus and the apprentices, and they saw where they were going. So they ran ahead on land from all the nearby towns to the place where Jesus and his apprentices were going. They actually arrived there before Jesus and the apprentices. ³⁴As Jesus and his apprentices got out of the boat, Jesus saw this great crowd. He felt compassion for them because they were confused, like sheep that do not have a shepherd. So he taught them many things.

³⁵Late in the afternoon the apprentices came to him and said, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is very late. ³⁶So send the people away to the surrounding towns and villages so they can buy food for themselves!" ³⁷But he replied to them, "No, you yourselves give them something to eat!" They replied to him, "We could not buy enough bread to feed this crowd, even if we had as much money as a man earns by working 200 days!" ³⁸But he replied to them, "How many loaves of bread do you have? Go and find out!" They went and found out and then they told him,

"We have only five flat loaves and two cooked fish!" ³⁹He instructed the apprentices to tell all the people to sit down on the green grass. ⁴⁰So the people sat in groups. There were 100 people in some groups and 50 people in other groups. ⁴¹Jesus took the five flat loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and thanked God for them. Then he broke the loaves and fish into pieces and kept giving them to the apprentices in order that they would distribute them to the people. ⁴²Everyone ate this food until they all had enough to eat! ⁴³The apprentices then collected twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and of the fish that were left over. ⁴⁴There were about 5,000 men who ate the bread and fish. They did not even count the women and children.

⁴⁵Right away, Jesus told his apprentices to get into the boat and then go ahead of him to a town called Bethsaida, which was further around the Sea of Galilee. He stayed and dismissed the many people who were there. ⁴⁶After he said goodbye to the people, he went up into the hills in order to pray. ⁴⁷When it was evening, the apprentices' boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was by himself on the land. ⁴⁸He saw that the wind was blowing against them as they rowed. As a result, they were having great difficulty. He approached them early in the morning, when it was still dark, by walking on the water. He intended to walk by them. ⁴⁹They saw him walking on the water, but they thought that he was a ghost. They screamed ⁵⁰because they all were terrified when they saw him. But he spoke to them. He said to them, "Be calm! Do not be afraid, because it is I!" ⁵¹He got into the boat and sat down with them, and the wind stopped blowing. They were completely amazed about what he had done. ⁵²Although they had seen Jesus multiply the bread and the fish, they did not grasp the meaning of it, as they should have.

⁵³After they went further around the Sea of Galilee in a boat, they came to shore at the town of Gennesaret. Then they fastened the boat there. ⁵⁴As soon as they got out of the boat, the people there recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵So they ran throughout the whole district in order to tell others that Jesus was there. Then the people placed those who were sick on stretchers and carried them to any place where they heard people say that Jesus was. ⁵⁶In whatever village, town, or place in the countryside where he went, they would bring to the marketplaces those who were sick. Then the sick people would beg Jesus to let them touch him or even the edge of his clothes in order that Jesus might heal them. All those who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 7

¹One day some Pharisees and some men who teach the Jewish laws and who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus. ²The Pharisees saw that his apprentices often ate without first washing their hands in the way of their special tradition. ³The Pharisees and all of the other Jews strictly observe their traditions that their ancestors taught. For example, they refuse to eat until they first wash their hands with a special ritual,

⁴especially after they return from buying things in the marketplace. They think that God will be angry with them if they do not do that, because some person or thing unacceptable to God might have touched them or the things they bought. ⁵That day, those Pharisees and men who studied the Jewish laws saw that some of his apprentices were eating food with hands that they had not washed using the special ritual. So they questioned Jesus and said, "Your apprentices disobey the traditions of our elders! Why do they eat food if they have not washed their hands using our ritual!" ⁶Jesus said to them, "Isaiah rebuked your ancestors, and his words describe very well you people who only pretend to be good! He wrote these words that God said:

'These people speak as if they honor me,

but they really do not think about honoring me at all.

⁷It is useless for them to worship me,

because they teach only what people say

as if I myself had commanded them.'

⁸You, like your ancestors, refuse to do what God has commanded. Instead, you follow only the traditions that others have taught.” ⁹Jesus also said to them, “You think that you are clever in refusing to do what God commanded just so that you can obey your own traditions! ¹⁰For example, our ancestor Moses wrote God’s command, ‘Honor your fathers and your mothers.’ He also wrote, ‘The authorities must execute a person who speaks evil about his father or mother.’ ¹¹But you teach people that it is alright if people give their things to God instead of giving them to their parents. You allow them to say to their parents, ‘What I was going to give to you to provide for you, I have now promised to give to God. So I cannot help you any longer!’ ¹²As a result, you are actually telling people that they no longer have to help their parents. ¹³In this way you disregard what God commanded! You teach your own things to others and tell them that they should obey them. And you do many other things like that.”

¹⁴Then Jesus again invited the crowd to come closer. Then he said to them, “All of you people, listen to me! Try to understand what I am about to tell you. ¹⁵Nothing that people eat causes God to consider them to be defiled. On the contrary, it is that which comes from people’s inner beings that causes God to consider them to be defiled.” ¹⁶[Every one of you should think carefully about what you heard me say.]

¹⁷After Jesus had left the crowd and entered a house with his apprentices. They questioned him about the parable that he had just spoken. ¹⁸He replied to them, “Did you not understand what it means? You ought to understand that nothing that enters us from outside can cause God to consider us unacceptable to him. ¹⁹Instead of entering and ruining our minds, it goes into our stomachs, and afterwards the refuse passes out of our bodies.” By saying this, Jesus was declaring that people can eat any food without causing God to consider them unacceptable to him. ²⁰He also said, “It is the thoughts and actions that come from within people that cause God to consider them unacceptable to him. ²¹Specifically, it is a person’s innermost being that causes them to think things that are evil; they act immorally, they steal things, they commit murder. ²²They commit adultery, they are greedy, they act maliciously, they deceive people. They act indecently, they envy people, they speak evil about others, they are proud, and they act foolishly. ²³People think these thoughts, and then they do these evil actions, and that is what causes God to consider them unacceptable to him.”

²⁴After Jesus and his apprentices left Galilee, they went to the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. While he stayed at a certain house, he did not want anyone to know it, but people soon found out that he was there. ²⁵A certain woman, whose daughter had an evil spirit within her, heard about Jesus. At once she came to him and knelt at his feet. ²⁶Now this woman was not a Jew. Her ancestors were not Jews. She herself had been born in the region of Phoenicia, in the district of Syria. She pleaded with Jesus that he force the evil spirit out from her daughter. ²⁷He said to the woman, “First let the children eat all they want, because it is not good for someone to take the food the mother has prepared for the children and then throw it to the little dogs.” ²⁸She replied to him, “Sir, what you say is correct, but even the house dogs, who lie under the table, eat the crumbs that the children drop.” ²⁹Jesus said to her, “Because of what you have said, go home. I have caused the evil spirit to leave your daughter.” ³⁰The woman returned to her house and saw that her child was lying quietly on the bed and that the evil spirit had left.

³¹Jesus and his apprentices left the region around Tyre and went north through Sidon, then toward the east through the area of the Ten Towns, and then south to the towns near the Sea of Galilee. ³²There, people brought to him a man who was deaf and could not talk. They begged Jesus to lay his hands on him in order to heal him. ³³So Jesus took him away from the crowd in order that the two of them could be alone. Then he put one of his fingers into each of the man’s ears. After he spat on his fingers, he touched the man’s tongue with his fingers. ³⁴Then he looked up toward heaven, he sighed and then in his own language he said to the man’s ears, “Ephphatha,” which means, “Be opened!” ³⁵At once the man could hear plainly. He also began to speak clearly, because what was causing him to be unable to speak was healed. ³⁶Jesus told the people not to tell anyone what he had done. But, although he repeatedly ordered them and others not to tell anyone about it, they kept talking about it all the more. ³⁷People who heard about it were utterly amazed and were saying, “Everything he has done is wonderful! Besides doing other amazing things, he enables deaf people to hear! And he enables those who cannot speak to speak!”

7:16 ^[1]

Chapter 8

¹During those days, a large crowd of people gathered again. After they had been there for two days, they had no food to eat. So Jesus called his apprentices to come close to him, and then he said to them, ²"This is the third day that these people have been with me, and they have nothing left to eat, so now I am very concerned for them. ³If I send them home while they are still hungry, some of them will faint on the way home. Some of them have come from far away." ⁴His apprentices knew that he was suggesting that they give the people something to eat, so one of them replied, "We cannot possibly find food to satisfy this crowd. No one lives in this place! ⁵Jesus asked them, "How many loaves of bread do you have?" They replied, "We have seven flat loaves." ⁶Jesus commanded the crowd, "Sit down on the ground!" After they sat down, he took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, broke them into pieces, and gave them to his apprentices to give to the people. ⁷They had also found that they had a few small fish. So after he thanked God for these, he told his apprentices, "Give them these also." After they gave the fish to the crowd, ⁸the people ate this food, and they had plenty to satisfy themselves. His apprentices collected the pieces of food that were left over and filled seven large baskets. ⁹His apprentices estimated that there were about 4,000 people who ate on that day. Then Jesus dismissed the crowd. ¹⁰Immediately after that, he got into the boat along with his apprentices, and they sailed across the Sea of Galilee to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹Then some Pharisees came to Jesus. They began arguing with him and insisting that he perform a miracle to show that God had sent him. ¹²Jesus sighed deeply within himself, and then he said, "Why are you asking me to perform a miracle? I will not do a miracle for you!" ¹³Then he left them. He and his apprentices got into the boat again and sailed across the Sea of Galilee. ¹⁴His apprentices had forgotten to bring along enough food. Specifically, they had only one flat loaf of bread with them in the boat. ¹⁵As they were going, Jesus warned them and said, "Be careful! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod!" ¹⁶The apprentices misunderstood him. So they said to one another, "He must have said that because we have no bread." ¹⁷Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves, so he said to them, "Why are you talking about not having enough bread? You should understand what I have said by now! You are not thinking! ¹⁸You have eyes, but you do not understand what you see! You have ears, but you do not understand what I say!" Then he asked, "Do you not remember what happened ¹⁹when I broke only five loaves and fed the 5,000 people? Not only was everyone satisfied, but there was food left over! How many baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected 12 baskets full." ²⁰Then he asked, "When I broke the seven loaves in order to feed the 4,000 people, again when everyone had plenty to eat, how many large baskets of uneaten pieces of bread did you collect?" They replied, "We collected seven large baskets full." ²¹Then he said to them, "I am do not know how it can be that you still do not understand."

²²They arrived at the town of Bethsaida. People brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch the man in order to heal him. ²³Jesus took the hand of the blind man and led him outside the town. After he spat into the man's eyes, and he put his hands on the man, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴The man looked up and then he said, "Yes, I see people! They are walking around, but I cannot see them clearly. They look like trees!" ²⁵Then Jesus again touched the eyes of the blind man. The man looked intently, and at that moment he was completely healed! He could see everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus said to him, "Do not go into the town!" Then he sent the man to his home.

²⁷Jesus and his apprentices left the town of Bethsaida and went to the villages near the city of Caesarea Philippi. On the way he questioned them, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸They replied, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah. And others say that you are one of the other former prophets." ²⁹He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied to him, "We believe that you are the Messiah!" ³⁰Then Jesus warned them strongly that they should not tell anyone yet that he was the Messiah.

³¹Then Jesus began to teach them that he, the Son of Man, would certainly suffer very much. He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the men who teach the Jewish laws. He would even be killed, but on the third day after he died, he would become alive again. ³²He said this to them clearly. But Peter took Jesus aside and started to scold him for talking this way. ³³Jesus turned around and looked at his apprentices. Then he rebuked Peter, saying, "Stop thinking like that! Satan is causing you to talk like that! Instead of wanting what God wants me to do, you are wanting me to do only what people would want me to do."

³⁴Then he called the crowd together along with his apprentices so that they might listen to him. He told them, "If any one of you wants to be my apprentice, you must not do only what makes you live easily. You must be willing to suffer pain like criminals who are forced to carry crosses to the places where they will be crucified. That is what anyone who wants to be my apprentice must do. ³⁵You must do that because those who try to save their lives by denying that they belong to me will lose their lives. Those who are killed because they are my apprentices and because they tell others the good news will live forever with me. ³⁶People might get everything they want in this world, but they are really gaining nothing if they do not gain eternal life! ³⁷Think carefully about the fact that there is absolutely nothing that people can give to God that would enable them to gain eternal life! ³⁸And think about this: Many people refuse to say that they belong to me. They reject what I say in these days when many people have turned away from God and live in sin, I, the Son of Man, will also refuse to say that they belong to me when I come back with the holy angels and have the glory that my Father has!"

Chapter 9

¹Jesus also said to the crowds and his apprentices, "Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will not die before you see God ruling powerfully!"

²Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and James' brother, John, and led them up a high mountain. While they were alone up there, he appeared very different to them. ³His clothes became dazzling white. They were whiter than anyone on earth could make them by bleaching them. ⁴Two prophets who had lived long ago, Moses and Elijah, appeared to them. Then the two of them began talking with Jesus. ⁵After a short time, Peter said, "Teacher, it is wonderful to be here! So allow us to make three shelters. One will be for you, one will be for Moses, and one will be for Elijah!" ⁶He said this because he wanted to say something, but he did not know what to say, because he and the other two apprentices were very frightened. ⁷Then a cloud appeared, and it covered them. God spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son. He is the one whom I love. Therefore, you should pay attention to what he says!" ⁸When the three apprentices looked around, they suddenly saw that only Jesus was with them and that Elijah and Moses were no longer there.

⁹While they were coming down the mountain, Jesus told them that they should not tell anyone yet what had just happened to him. He said, "You may tell them after I, the Son of Man, become alive again after I die." ¹⁰So they did not tell others about it for a long time. But they discussed among themselves what it meant when he said that he would rise from the dead.

¹¹The three apprentices asked Jesus, "The men who teach the Jewish laws say that Elijah must come back to the earth before the Messiah comes to earth, {but we have just seen Elijah,} so is what they are teaching wrong?"

¹²⁻¹³Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised to send Elijah to come first to put everything as it should be. But Elijah has already come, and our leaders treated him very badly, just like they wanted to do just like prophets long ago had said they would. But there is much written in the Scriptures about me, the Son of Man. The Scriptures say that I will suffer a lot and that people will reject me."

¹⁴Then Jesus and those three apprentices arrived where the other apprentices were. They saw a large crowd around the other apprentices and some men who taught the Jewish laws arguing with them. ¹⁵The crowd was very surprised to see Jesus come. So they ran to him and greeted him. ¹⁶Jesus asked them, "What are you arguing about?" ¹⁷A man in the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son here to you {in order that you would heal him}. There is an evil spirit in him that makes him unable to talk. ¹⁸Whenever the spirit begins to control him, it

throws him down. He foams at the mouth, he grinds his teeth together, and he becomes stiff. I asked your apprentices to expel the spirit, but they were not able to do it." ¹⁹Jesus replied to them by saying, "You faithless people! I have become greatly wearied by your unbelief! Bring the boy to me." ²⁰So they brought the boy to Jesus. As soon as the evil spirit saw Jesus, it shook the boy severely, and the boy fell on the ground. He rolled around and foamed at the mouth. ²¹Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" He replied, "This started to happen when he was a child. ²²The spirit does not only do this, but he also often throws him into the fire or into the water in order to kill him. Pity us and help us, if you can!" ²³Jesus exclaimed to him, "Of course I can! God can do anything for people who believe that he is able to do it!" ²⁴Immediately the child's father shouted, "I believe that you can help me, but I do not believe strongly. Help me to believe more strongly!" ²⁵Jesus saw that the crowd was growing. He rebuked the evil spirit: "You evil spirit, you who are causing this boy to be deaf and unable to talk! I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!" ²⁶The evil spirit shouted and shook the boy violently, and then it left the boy. The boy did not move. He seemed like a dead body. So most of the people there said, "He has died!" ²⁷However, Jesus took the boy by the hand and helped him get up. Then the boy stood up. ²⁸Later, when Jesus and his apprentices were alone in a house, they asked him, "Why were we not able to force the evil spirit out?" ²⁹Jesus said to them, "You can force this type of evil spirit out only by abstaining from food and praying to God. There is no other way that you can expel them."

³⁰After Jesus and his apprentices left that region, they traveled through the region of Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone else to know where he was. ³¹Jesus wanted to have time to teach his apprentices. He was telling them, "Someday my enemies will arrest me, the Son of Man, and I will be put into the hands of other men. Those men will kill me. But on the third day after I die, I will become alive again!" ³²The apprentices did not understand what Jesus was telling them, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

³³Then Jesus and his apprentices returned to the town of Capernaum. When they were in the house, Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about while we were traveling on the road?" ³⁴But the apprentices did not reply. They were ashamed to reply because, while they were traveling, they had been arguing with each other about which one of them was the most important. ³⁵Jesus sat down. He called his 12 apprentices to come close to him, and then he said to them, "If anyone wants God to consider him to be the most important person of all, he must consider himself to be the least important person of all, and he must serve everyone else." ³⁶Then Jesus took a child and placed him among them. He took the child in his arms, and then he said to them, ³⁷"Those who welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me. Whoever welcomes me, it is as though they are also welcoming God, who sent me to represent him."

³⁸John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone who was forcing evil spirits out of people. He claimed that he had authority from you to do that. So we told him to stop doing it, because he was not one of us apprentices." ³⁹Jesus said, "Do not tell him to stop doing that. For no person will say bad things about me soon after performing a mighty deed with my authority. ⁴⁰Those who are not opposing us are trying to achieve the same goals that we are. ⁴¹God will certainly reward those who help you in any way, even if they simply give you a cup of water to drink because you follow me, the Messiah!"

⁴²Jesus also said, "But if you cause someone who believes in me to sin{, God will punish you severely}. If someone tied a very heavy stone around your neck and threw you into the sea, that would be better for you than if God punished you for causing a person who believes in me to sin. ⁴³So if you are wanting to use one of your hands to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut your hand off and throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is better that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your hands while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result God throws your whole body into hell. There, the fires never go out! ⁴⁴[¹] [It is a place where maggots never stop feeding on them, and the fire that burns them never goes out.] ⁴⁵If you are wanting to use one of your feet to sin, stop using your foot! Even if you have to cut off your foot to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you {do not sin and} do live eternally, even though you lack one of your feet while you are here on earth. But it is not good {that you sin, and as a result,} God puts your whole body into hell ⁴⁶[²] [where maggots never stop feeding on them, and the fire that burns them never goes out.] ⁴⁷If because of what you see you are tempted to sin, stop looking at those things! Stop even if you have to gouge out your eye and throw it away to avoid sinning,

do it! It is better to have only one eye and to enter the kingdom over which God reigns, than to have two eyes and have him throw you into hell. ⁴⁸In that place maggots feed on the people there forever, and the fires are never put out.

⁴⁹You must endure difficulties in order that God will be pleased with you. Your difficulties are like a fire that makes things pure. Your enduring is also like people putting salt on their sacrifices to make them pure. ⁵⁰Salt is useful to put on food, but you cannot make it taste salty again if it becomes flavorless. Similarly, you must remain useful to God, because how can you become useful to God again if you become useless. You must also live peacefully with each other."

9:44 ^[1]

9:46 ^[2]

Chapter 10

¹Jesus left that place with his apprentices, and they went through the region of Judea and on across to the east side of the Jordan River. When crowds of people again gathered around him, he taught them again, as he regularly did.

²While Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees approached him and asked him, "Does our law permit a man to divorce his wife?" They asked that in order to be able to criticize him no matter whether he answered "yes" or "no." ³Jesus answered them, "What did Moses command your ancestors about a man divorcing his wife?" ⁴One of them replied, "Moses permitted that a man may write out divorce papers so that he may send her away." ⁵Jesus said to them, "It was because of your rebellious attitude that Moses gave you that rule for you. ⁶Remember that when God first created people, he made one man, and he made one woman to become that man's wife. ⁷That explains why God said, 'When a man and woman marry, they should no longer live with their fathers and mothers after they marry. ⁸Instead, the two of them will live together, and they will become so closely united that they are like one person.' Therefore, although the people who marry were two separate persons before, God regards them as one person after marriage{, so he wants them to remain married to each other}. ⁹Because that is true, a man must not divorce his wife. God has joined them together, and he wishes them to stay together!"

¹⁰When Jesus and his apprentices were alone in a house, they asked him again about this. ¹¹Jesus said to them, "God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery. ¹²God also considers a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man to be committing adultery."

¹³Now people were bringing children to Jesus so that he would lay his hands on them and bless them. But his apprentices scolded those people. ¹⁴When Jesus saw that, he became angry. He said to his apprentices, "Allow the children to come to me! Do not forbid them! It is people who are humble and trust God as they do who can experience God ruling in their lives. ¹⁵Note this: Those who do not welcome God's rule over them in the same manner as children do—they will surely not enter the kingdom over which God reigns." ¹⁶Then Jesus held the children in his arms. He also put his hands on them and called on God to do good to them.

¹⁷As Jesus was starting to travel again with his apprentices, a man ran up to him. He knelt before Jesus and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do so that I can live with God eternally?" ¹⁸Jesus said to him, "You do not realize what you are saying by calling me good! Only God is good! ¹⁹{But to answer your question,} you know the commandments of Moses: 'Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal from anyone, do not lie about anything, do not cheat anyone, and be respectful towards your father and mother.'" ²⁰The man said to him, "Teacher, I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young." ²¹Jesus looked at him with warm affection. He said to him, "There is one thing that you have not yet done. You must go home, sell all that you possess, and then give the money to poor people. As a result, you will be spiritually rich in heaven. After you have done what I have told you, come with me and be my disciple!" ²²The man was upset by Jesus' instructions. He left in great sorrow, for he could not part with his wealth. ²³Jesus looked around at the people. Then he exclaimed to his apprentices, "It is very difficult for people who are wealthy to place themselves under God's rule over them." ²⁴The apprentices were surprised by what Jesus said. {They thought that God favored the rich people, so if God did not

save them, he would not save anyone.} Jesus said again, "You dear believers who are under my care, it is very difficult for anyone to decide to let God rule his life. ²⁵It is impossible for a very large animal like a camel to go through the tiny hole in a sewing needle. It is almost as difficult for rich people to decide to let God rule their lives." ²⁶The apprentices were very amazed. So they said to Jesus, "If that is so, then how can anyone be saved!" ²⁷Jesus looked at them, and then he said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves! But God certainly can save them, because God can do anything!" ²⁸Peter said, "Look, we have left behind everything, and we have become your apprentices." ²⁹Jesus replied, "I want you to know this: Those who have left their houses, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or their plots of ground to be my disciples and to proclaim the good news, ³⁰they will receive in this life a hundred times as much as they left behind. That will include houses and family members: brothers and sisters and mothers and children, and plots of ground. Also, people will persecute them {here on earth because they believe in me}, but in the future age they will live with God eternally. ³¹Many people who are considered by others to be very important will be considered unimportant by God, and many people who are considered by others to be unimportant will be considered very important by God!"

³²Some days later as they continued to travel, Jesus and his apprentices were walking on the road that leads up to the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was walking ahead of them. The apprentices were astonished and the other people who were with them were afraid. Along the way Jesus took the 12 apprentices to a place by themselves again. Then he began to tell them about what was going to happen to him. ³³He said, "Listen carefully! We are going up to Jerusalem. There the chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws will arrest me, the Son of Man. They will declare that I must die. Then they will take me to the Roman authorities. ³⁴Their men will ridicule me and spit on me. They will scourge me, and then they will kill me. But on the third day after that, I will become alive again!"

³⁵Along the way, James and John, who were the two sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us what we will ask you to do!" ³⁶Jesus said to them, "What is it that you want me to do for you?" ³⁷They said to him, "When you rule gloriously, let one of us sit at your right side and one sit at your left side." ³⁸But Jesus said to them, "You do not understand what you are asking for." {Then he asked them,} "Can you endure suffering like I am about to suffer? Can you endure people killing you as they will kill me?" ³⁹They said to him, "Yes, we are able to do that!" Then Jesus said to them, "It is true that you will endure suffering like I will suffer, and you will endure people killing you as they will kill me. ⁴⁰But I am not the one who chooses who will sit next to me. God will give those places to the ones whom he chooses in advance."

⁴¹The other ten apprentices later heard about what James and John had requested. {As a result,} they were angry with them. ⁴²Then, after Jesus called them all together, he said to them, "You know that those who rule the non-Jews enjoy showing that they are powerful. You also know that their officials enjoy commanding others. ⁴³But do not be like them! On the contrary, if any of you want to achieve greatness, he must consider himself as the servant of others. ⁴⁴And, if any one of you wants God to consider him to be the most important, he must take the role of a slave for the rest of you. ⁴⁵Even I, the Son of Man, did not come to receive service but to give service and to die for people as payment for their sin, buying them freedom from the punishment God set for sinners."

⁴⁶On the way to the city of Jerusalem, Jesus and his apprentices came to the city of Jericho. Then, while they were leaving Jericho along with a great crowd, a man who could not see and who often asked others for money was sitting beside the road. His name was Bartimaeus, and his father's name was Timaeus. ⁴⁷When he heard people say that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by, he shouted, "Jesus! You who are descended from King David, help me!" ⁴⁸Many people scolded him and told him that he should be quiet. Instead, he shouted even more loudly, "You who are descended from King David, be merciful to me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him to come over here!" They called the blind man, saying, "Jesus is calling you! So cheer up and stand up and come!" ⁵⁰He threw aside his cloak as he jumped up, and he came to Jesus. ⁵¹Jesus asked him, "How would you like me to help you?" The blind man said to him, "Teacher, I want to be able to see again!" ⁵²Jesus said to him, "Because you have trusted in me, I have healed you! So you may go!" He could see immediately. And he went with Jesus along the road.

Chapter 11

¹When Jesus and his apprentices came close to Jerusalem, they came to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus sent two of his apprentices on ahead of them. ²Jesus said to them, "Go to that village just ahead of us. As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied up there. It is an animal that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'Jesus needs it. He will send it back here with someone as soon as he no longer needs it.'" ⁴So the two apprentices went, and they found the donkey. It was tied close to the door of a house and was standing in the street. Then they untied it. ⁵Some of the people who were there asked Jesus' two apprentices, "Why are you untying the donkey?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had instructed them to say. So the people permitted them to take the donkey. ⁷The two apprentices took the donkey to Jesus and put their robes on it {to make something for him to sit on}. Jesus then sat on the donkey. ⁸Many people spread their robes on the road in front of him. Others cut branches from palm trees in nearby fields and spread them along the road. ⁹The people who were going in front of him and behind him were all shouting, "Praise God!" {and} "May God bless this one who comes as his representative." ¹⁰{They also shouted,} May God bless you when you rule like our ancestor King David ruled!" "Praise God who is in the highest heaven!"

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem with them, and then he went into the temple courtyard. After he looked around at everything there, he left the city because it was already late in the afternoon. He returned to the village of Bethany with the 12 apprentices.

¹²The next day, as Jesus and his apprentices were leaving Bethany, he felt hungry. ¹³At a distance, he saw a fig tree with all its leaves, so he went to it to see if he could find any figs on it. But when he came to it, he found no fruit on it, only leaves. This was because it was not yet the normal time of year when fig trees would produce ripe figs. ¹⁴He said to the tree, "No one will ever eat fruit from you again." And his apprentices heard this.

¹⁵Jesus and his apprentices went back into Jerusalem and entered the temple courtyard. He saw people who were selling and buying animals for sacrifices. He chased those people from the temple courtyard. He also overturned the tables of those who were selling temple tax money in exchange for Roman coins. And he overturned the seats of the men who were selling pigeons for buyers to sacrifice. ¹⁶He would not allow anyone who was carrying anything to sell to go through the temple area. ¹⁷Then as he taught those people, he said to them, "One of the prophets wrote in the Scriptures that God said, 'I want people to call my house a house where people from all nations may pray,' but you robbers have made it like a cave where robbers hide." ¹⁸The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws later heard about what Jesus had done. They were planning how they might kill him, but they feared him because they realized that the whole crowd was amazed at what he was teaching. ¹⁹That evening, Jesus and his apprentices left the city {and again slept in Bethany}.

²⁰The next morning while they were going along the road toward Jerusalem, they saw that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed had dried and shriveled completely. ²¹Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the fig tree, and he said to Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered!" ²²Jesus replied, "You should not be surprised that God did what I asked! You must trust that God will do whatever you ask him to do! ²³Also note this: If anyone says to this mountain, 'Rise up and throw yourself into the sea,' if he does not doubt that what he asks for will happen, that is, if he believes that it will happen, God will do it for him. ²⁴So I tell you, whenever you ask God for something when you pray, believe that you will receive it, and, if you do trust in him, God will do it for you. ²⁵Now, I tell you this also: Whenever you are praying, if you have a grudge against any person because they have sinned against you, cancel their debt to you so that your Father in heaven will likewise cancel your debt to him for your sins." ²⁶^[1] [But if you do not cancel their debt, neither will your Father, who is in heaven, cancel your debt for your sins.]

²⁷Jesus and his apprentices arrived in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem again. While Jesus was walking there, a group consisting of chief priests, some men who taught the Jewish laws, and elders came to him. ²⁸They said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do things like those you did here yesterday?" ²⁹Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question. If you answer me, then I will tell you who authorized

me to do those things. ³⁰Was it God who authorized John to baptize those who came to him? Or was it people who authorized him?" ³¹They debated among themselves as to what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say that it was God who authorized him, he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed what John said!'" ³²On the other hand, if we say that it was people who authorized John, then what will happen to us?" They were afraid to say that about where John got his authority, because they knew that the people would be very angry with them. They knew that all the people truly believed that John was a prophet whom God had sent. ³³So they answered Jesus, "We do not know who authorized John to baptize people." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who authorized me to do those things here yesterday."

11:26 ^[1]

Chapter 12

¹Then Jesus began to tell the Jewish leaders a story with a lesson. He said, "A certain man planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it in order to protect it. He made a stone tank to collect the grape juice that they would press out of the grapes. He also built a tower for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it and he left to travel to a different country. ²When the time came to harvest the grapes, the owner of the vineyard sent a servant to the people who were taking care of his vineyard, because he wanted to receive from them his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³But when the servant arrived, they grabbed him and beat the servant, and they did not give him any of the fruit. Then they sent him away. ⁴Later the owner sent another of his servants to them. But they beat that one on the head, and they insulted him. ⁵Later the owner sent still another servant. That man the people who were caring for the vineyard killed. They also mistreated many other servants whom he sent. Some they beat and some they killed. ⁶The owner still had one other person with him, his son, whom he loved very much. So, finally he sent his son to them, because he thought that they would recognize his son and treat him well. ⁷But when the people who were caring for the vineyard saw his son coming, they said to each other, 'Look! Here comes the owner's son, who will someday inherit the vineyard! So let us kill him in order that this vineyard will be ours!' ⁸They seized the owner's son and killed him. Then they threw his body outside the vineyard. ⁹So I will tell you what the owner of the vineyard will do. He will come, and he will kill those evil men who were taking care of his vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it. ¹⁰Are you not aware of what the scripture says?

The men who were building the building refused to use a certain stone. But the Lord has put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone in the building! ¹¹The Lord has done this, and we marvel as we look at it."

¹²Then the Jewish leaders realized that Jesus was accusing them when he told this story about what those wicked people did. So the Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him, but they were afraid of what the crowds of people would do if the Jewish leaders did that. So they left him and went away.

¹³The Jewish leaders sent to Jesus some Pharisees {who thought that the Jews should pay only the tax that their own Jewish authorities required people to pay}. They also sent some members of the party that supported Herod Antipas and the Roman government. They wanted to trick Jesus; they wanted to make Jesus say something that would make one of those groups angry with him so they could bring charges against him. ¹⁴After they arrived, one of them said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you teach only what is true. We also know that you are not influenced by people's opinions. Instead, you truthfully teach all people what God wants them to do; you do not show regard for their social position. {So tell us what you think about this matter:} Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not? Should we pay the taxes, or should we not pay them?" ¹⁵Jesus knew that they did not really want to know what God wanted them to do. So he said to them, "I know that you are just trying to make me say something wrong for which you can accuse me, {but I will answer your question anyway.} Bring me a coin so that I might look at it." ¹⁶After they had brought him a coin, he asked them, "Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?" They replied, "It is a picture and the name of Caesar {the man who rules the Roman government}."

¹⁷Jesus said to them, “[In that case] give to the government what belongs to the government and give to God what belongs to God.” They were amazed by what he said.

¹⁸Men who belong to the Sadducee group deny that people become alive again after they die. [In order to discredit Jesus by ridiculing the idea that people will live again, some of them] came to him and asked him, ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses instructed us Jews that if a man who has no children dies, his brother should marry the dead man’s widow. Then if those two bear children, everyone will consider that those children are the children of the man who died, and in that way the dead man will continue to have descendants. ²⁰So here is an example: There were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman, but he and his wife did not bear any children. Then he later died. ²¹The second brother [followed this law and] married that woman and he, too, did not bear any children. Then he later died. The third brother did like his other brothers did. But he also did not bear any children, and later died. ²²Eventually all seven brothers married that woman one by one, but no one had any children, and one by one they died. Afterwards the woman died, too. ²³[Therefore, if what some people say were true, that people will become alive again after they die,] whose wife do you think that woman will be when people become alive again? Keep in mind that she had been married to all seven brothers!” ²⁴Jesus replied to them, “You are certainly wrong. You do not know what the Scriptures teach about this. You also do not understand God’s power to make people alive again. ²⁵[That woman will not be the wife of any of those brothers,] because when people become alive again, instead of men having wives and women having husbands, they will be like the angels in heaven. [Angels do not marry.] ²⁶But let me talk about people becoming alive again after they die. In the book that Moses wrote, he said something about people who have died that I am sure that you have read. When Moses was looking at the bush that was burning, God said to him, ‘I am the God whom Abraham worships and the God whom Isaac worships and the God whom Jacob worships.’ [God would not have said that if he had not made those men alive again and if he was not still their God.] ²⁷Now it is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So when you say that dead people do not become alive again, you are very wrong.”

²⁸A man who taught the Jewish laws heard their discussion. He knew that Jesus had answered the Sadducees’ question very well. So he stepped forward and asked Jesus, “Which commandment is the most important?” ²⁹Jesus answered, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, you people of Israel! The Lord our God, he only is our God. ³⁰You must love the Lord your God in all that you want and feel, in all that you think, and in all that you do!’ ³¹The next most important commandment is: ‘You must love the people around you as much as you love yourself.’ No other commandment is more important than these two!” ³²The man said to Jesus, “Teacher, you have answered well. You say truthfully that God is the only God and that there is no other God. ³³You have also said correctly that we should love God in all that we want and feel, in all that we think, and in all that we do. And you have said correctly that we must love people with whom we come in contact as much as we love ourselves. And you have also correctly said that doing these things pleases God more than burning food or animals as an offering or giving other sacrifices.” ³⁴Jesus realized that this man had answered wisely. So he said to him, “[I perceive that] you are close to deciding to let God rule over you.” After that, the Jewish leaders were afraid to ask him any more questions like that to try to trap him.

³⁵Later, while Jesus was teaching in the temple area, he said to the people, “How is it that those who teach the Jewish laws say—and they are correct in saying—that the Messiah is a descendant of King David? ³⁶The Holy Spirit caused David to say about the Messiah, ‘God said to my Lord, “Sit here beside me at my right hand, in the place where I will highly honor you above everyone else! Sit here until the time when I completely defeat your enemies!”’ ³⁷Therefore, because David himself calls the Messiah ‘my Lord,’ how can the Messiah be just a man who descended from King David? He must be much greater than David!” Many people listened gladly to him as he taught those things.

³⁸While Jesus was teaching the people, he said to them, “Beware that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like people to honor them, so they put on long robes and walk around in order to show people how important they are. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. ³⁹They like to sit in the most important seats in the Jewish meeting place. At festivals, they like to sit in the seats where the most honored people sit. ⁴⁰They [also] steal all the property of widows. But to make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time [in public]. God will certainly punish them severely!”

⁴¹Later, Jesus sat down in the temple area opposite the boxes in which people put offerings for God. As he was sitting there, he watched as many people put money into one of the boxes, and he noticed many rich people put in large amounts of money. ⁴²Then a poor widow came along and dropped in two small copper coins, which together are equal in value to one Roman quadrans. ⁴³⁻⁴⁴Jesus gathered his apprentices around him and said to them, "The truth is that those other people have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. But this woman, who is very poor, has put in all the money that she had to pay for the things she needed for today. So this poor widow has put more money into the box than all the others!"

Chapter 13

¹While Jesus was leaving the temple area, one of his apprentices said to him, "Teacher, look at how marvelous these huge cut blocks of stone in the walls are and how wonderful these buildings are!" ²Jesus said to him, "Yes, these buildings that you are looking at are wonderful, but I want to tell you something about them. {Foreign invaders} will destroy them completely, with the result that no stone here in this temple area will be left on top of another stone."

³After they arrived at the Mount of Olives across the valley from the temple, Jesus sat down. When Peter, James, John, and Andrew were alone with him, they asked him, ⁴"Tell us, when will these things that God has planned happen? What will happen to show us these things are about to take place?" ⁵Jesus replied to them, "Beware that no one deceive you concerning what will happen! ⁶Many people will come, and each will claim to be me. Each will say about himself, 'I am the Messiah!' They will deceive many people. ⁷Whenever people tell you about wars that are happening and about wars that could happen, do not let yourself be troubled. These things will definitely happen. But when they do happen, do not think that it is the end of the world! ⁸Groups who live in various countries will fight each other, and various governments will fight each other. There will also be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines. Yet, when these things happen, people will have only just begun to suffer. These first things that they suffer will be like the first pains a woman suffers who is about to bear a child. They will suffer much more after that.

⁹Be ready for what people will do to you at that time. Because you believe in me, they will arrest you and put you on trial before the religious councils. In the Jewish meeting place, others will beat you. People will put you on trial in the presence of high government authorities. As a result, you will be able to tell them about me. ¹⁰My followers must proclaim the good news to people in all nations before God finishes everything that he has planned. ¹¹When people arrest you in order to prosecute you, do not worry about what you will say. Instead, say what God puts into your mind at that time. Then it will not be just you who will be speaking. It will be the Holy Spirit who will be speaking through you. ¹²{Other evil things will happen:} People who do not believe in me will help others seize their brothers and sisters in order that the government can execute them. Some parents will betray their children and some children will betray their parents so that government officials will kill their parents. ¹³Many people will hate you because you believe in me. But God will save all of you who continue to trust in me strongly {until your life ends}.

¹⁴During that time the detestable thing will enter the temple. It will defile the temple and cause people to abandon it. When you see it where it should not be, you should run away quickly! (May everyone who is reading this pay attention to this warning!) At that time those people who are in the district of Judea should flee to higher hills.

¹⁵Those people who are outside their houses should not enter their houses in order to get anything. ¹⁶Those who are working in a field should not return to their houses in order to get additional clothes. ¹⁷When this happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for those who are nursing their babies. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹In those days people will suffer very severely. People have never suffered like that from the time when God first created the world until now, and people will not suffer that way again. So pray that this painful time will not happen in winter, {when it will be hard to travel}. ²⁰If God had not decided that he would shorten that time when people suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten that time because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen. ²¹⁻²²At that time people will falsely say that they are the Messiah. And some will appear claiming to be prophets from God. Then they will perform many kinds of miracles. They will even try to deceive the people whom

God has chosen. So at that time if someone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!', or if someone says, 'Look, there he is!', do not believe it! ²³Be alert! Remember that I have warned you about all this before it happens!

²⁴After the time when people suffer like that, God will cause the sun to become dark and the moon will not shine;

²⁵God will cause the stars to fall from the sky and all the things in the sky to shake out of their place. ²⁶Then people will see me, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds powerfully and gloriously. ²⁷Then I will send out my angels so they can gather together the people whom God has chosen from everywhere, from the most remote places on earth.

²⁸Now I want you to learn something from how fig trees grow. When their branches become tender and their leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is almost here. ²⁹Similarly, when you see what I have just described happening, you yourselves will know that it is very near the time for me to return. It will be as though I am already at the door. ³⁰Keep this in mind: this generation will not die until every one of these things take place. ³¹{You can be certain that these things that I have prophesied will happen.} The earth and what is in the sky will one day be destroyed, but these things that I have told you will certainly happen. ³²But no one knows the exact time when I will return. The angels in heaven also do not know. Even I, God's Son, do not know. Only my Father knows. ³³So be ready! Always be alert and prayerful, because you do not know the time when I will return! ³⁴It will be similar to this. When a man who wants to travel to a distant place is about to leave his house, he tells his servants that they should manage the house. He tells each one what he should do. Then he tells the doorkeeper to be ready for his return. ³⁵That man must always be ready, because he does not know whether his master will return in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows at dawn, or in the morning after light from the sun has appeared in the sky. Similarly, you also must always be ready, because you do not know when I will return. ³⁶May it not happen that when I come suddenly, I will find that you are not ready! ³⁷These words that I am saying to you apprentices I am saying to everyone: Always be ready!"

Chapter 14

¹It was only two days before the people would begin to celebrate the week-long festival that they called the Passover. During those days they also celebrated the festival which they called The Feast of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws were planning how they could arrest Jesus deceitfully. They wanted to accuse him in front of the Roman authorities so that they would execute him. ²They were saying to one another, "We must not do it during the celebration because if we do it then, the people will be very angry with us and riot!"

³Jesus was a guest in the village of Bethany, in the house of Simon, who previously had leprosy. While they were eating, a woman came to him. She was carrying a stone jar that contained an expensive, fragrant ointment which was made of very expensive, pure nard. She opened the jar and then poured all the fragrant ointment on Jesus' head. ⁴Some of the people who were present became angry and said to themselves, "It is terrible that she wasted that fragrant ointment! ⁵It could have been sold for a year's wages, and then the money could have been given to poor people!" They rebuked her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Stop scolding her! She has done to me what I consider to be very appropriate. So you should not bother her! ⁷You will always have poor people among you. So you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not be here with you much longer. ⁸{It is appropriate that} she has done what she was able. It is as if she knew that I was going to die soon and has anointed my body for their burying it. ⁹I will tell you this: Wherever my followers preach the good news throughout the world, they will also tell what she has done, and people will remember her."

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests to talk about helping them to capture Jesus. {He did that even though} he was one of the 12 apprentices. ¹¹When the chief priests heard what he was willing to do for them, they were very happy. They promised that they would reward him with money in return. Judas agreed and began watching for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

¹²On the first day of the celebration that they call Unleavened Bread, when they kill the lambs for the Passover, Jesus' apprentices said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare the meal for the Passover celebration so that we can eat it?" ¹³So Jesus chose two of his apprentices to prepare everything. He said to them, "Go into the city of Jerusalem. You will meet a man who will be carrying a large jar full of water. Follow him. ¹⁴When he enters a house, say to the man who owns the house, 'Our teacher wants us to prepare the meal of the Passover celebration so that he can eat it with us his apprentices. Please show us the room.' ¹⁵He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will have carpets, eating couches, and an eating table, and it will be ready for us to eat a meal in it. Then prepare the meal there for us." ¹⁶So the two apprentices left. They went into the city and found everything to be just as he had told them. Then they prepared the meal for the Passover celebration.

¹⁷When it was evening, Jesus arrived at that house with the 12 apprentices.

¹⁸As they were all lying back beside the table and eating, Jesus said, "Listen carefully to this: One of you will enable my enemies to arrest me. It is one of you who is eating with me right now!" ¹⁹The apprentices became very sad, and each one said to Jesus, one after another, "Certainly it is not I who will betray you, right?" ²⁰Then he said to them, "It is one of you 12 apprentices, the person who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²¹It is certain that I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what the prophets have written about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who will help my enemies seize me! In fact, it would be better for that man if he had never been born!"

²²While they were eating, he took a flat loaf of bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it into pieces and gave it to them and said to them, "This bread is my body. Take it and eat it." ²³Afterwards, he took a cup that contained wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to his apprentices, and they all drank from the cup. ²⁴Jesus said to his apprentices, "This wine is my blood, which is about to flow from my body when my enemies kill me. With this blood I will confirm the agreement that God has made to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁵I want you to know this: I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again when God rules everywhere as king." ²⁶After they sang a song praising God, Jesus and his apprentices went out toward the Mount of Olives.

²⁷While they were on their way, Jesus said to his apprentices, "Zechariah the prophet wrote in the Scriptures that God said about me, 'I will kill the shepherd and his sheep will scatter.' Those words will come true. You will all leave me and run away. ²⁸But after God makes me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee and meet you there." ²⁹Peter said to Jesus, "Perhaps all the other apprentices will leave you, but not I! I will not leave you!" ³⁰Then Jesus said to Peter, "The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows two times, you yourself will say about me three times that you do not know me." ³¹But Peter replied strongly, "Even if they kill me, I will never say that I do not know you." And all the other apprentices said the same thing.

³²Jesus and his apprentices went to the place that people call Gethsemane. Jesus said to some of his apprentices, "Stay here while I pray!" ³³He took Peter, James, and John with him. Jesus became extremely emotionally anguished. ³⁴He said to them, "I am very sorrowful. It is as if I were about to die. You men stay here and keep watch!" ³⁵Jesus went a bit farther and threw himself on the ground. Then he prayed that if it were possible, he would not have to suffer. ³⁶He said, "O my Father, because you are able to do everything, rescue me so that I do not have to suffer now! But do not do what I want. Instead, do what you want!" ³⁷Then Jesus returned to where he had left Peter, James, and John. He found these apprentices sleeping. He woke them up and said to Peter, who was also called Simon, "Simon! I am disappointed that you fell asleep and that you were not able to stay awake for just a short time!" ³⁸{And Jesus said to them,} "You want to do what I say, but you are not strong enough. Keep awake and pray so that you can resist when you are tempted!" ³⁹Then he went away again and prayed again what he had prayed before. ⁴⁰When Jesus returned, he found that they were sleeping again; they were so sleepy that they could not keep their eyes open. Because they were ashamed, they did not know what to say to him when he awakened them. ⁴¹Then Jesus went and prayed once more. He returned a third time and found them sleeping again. He said to them, "I am disappointed that you are sleeping again! You have slept enough. The time for me to suffer is about to begin. Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to seize me, the Son of Man. ⁴²So get up! Let us go! Look! Here comes the one who is enabling them to seize me!"

⁴³While he was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of Jesus' 12 apprentices, he came to enable Jesus' enemies to capture him. A crowd who carried swords and clubs was with him. The leaders of the Jewish Council had sent them. ⁴⁴Judas, who was helping Jesus' enemies to seize him, had previously told this crowd, "The man whom I kiss is the one whom you want. When I kiss him, seize him, and lead him away while you guard him carefully." ⁴⁵So, when Judas arrived, he immediately approached Jesus and said, "My teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus. ⁴⁶Then the crowd grabbed Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷But one of his apprentices, who was standing nearby, drew his sword. He struck the servant of the high priest with it, but he only cut off the servant's ear. ⁴⁸Jesus said to them, "It is surprising that you have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a bandit. ⁴⁹For many days I was with you in the temple courtyard teaching the people. Why did you not try to arrest me then? But this is happening in order that what the prophets wrote in the Scriptures about me may happen." ⁵⁰Then all Jesus' apprentices left him and ran away. ⁵¹At that time, a young man was following Jesus. He was wearing only a linen cloth around his body. The crowd grabbed the young man, ⁵²but, as he pulled away from them, he left behind the linen cloth in their hands, and then he ran away naked.

⁵³The men who had seized Jesus led him away to the house where the high priest lived. All of the Jewish council were gathering there. ⁵⁴Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He went into the courtyard of the house where the high priest lived, and he sat there with the men who guarded the house of the high priest. He was warming himself beside a fire. ⁵⁵The chief priests and all the rest of the Jewish council tried to find people who would tell lies about Jesus so that they could convince the Roman authorities to execute him. They did not succeed. ⁵⁶A number of people spoke lies about Jesus, but the statements they made did not agree with each other. ⁵⁷Finally, some people stood up and accused Jesus falsely by saying, ⁵⁸"We heard him when he said, 'I will destroy this temple that was built by men, and then within three days I will build another temple without help from anyone.'" ⁵⁹But what some of these men said did not agree with what others of them said.

⁶⁰Then the high priest himself stood up in front of them and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply to anything that they have said? What do you say about all the things that they are saying in order to accuse you?" ⁶¹But Jesus was silent and did not reply. Then the high priest tried again. He asked him, "Are you the Messiah? Do you say that you are the Son of God?" ⁶²Jesus said, "I am. Furthermore, you will see me, the Son of Man, ruling beside God, who is completely powerful. You will also see me coming down through the clouds in the sky!" ⁶³In response to Jesus' words, the high priest tore his outer garment in protest, and the high priest said, "We surely do not need any more witnesses to testify against this man! ⁶⁴You have heard his blasphemous claim to be God!" They all agreed that Jesus was guilty and that he deserved to be killed. ⁶⁵Then some of them began spitting on Jesus. They put a blindfold on him, and then they began striking him and saying to him, "If you are a prophet, tell us who hit you!" And those who were guarding Jesus struck him with their hands.

⁶⁶While Peter was outside in the courtyard of the high priest's house, one of the girls who worked for the high priest came near him. ⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself beside the fire, she looked at him closely. Then she said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from the town of Nazareth!" ⁶⁸But Peter denied it by saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about!" Then he went away from there to the gate of the courtyard. ⁶⁹The servant girl saw him there and said again to the people who were standing nearby, "This man is one of those who have been with that man they arrested." ⁷⁰But he denied it again. After a little while, those who were standing there said to Peter again, "{The way you speak shows that} you also are from the district of Galilee. So it is certain that you are one of the men who accompanied Jesus!" ⁷¹But he began to exclaim, "I do not know the man about which you are talking! For God knows that I am speaking truthfully, and may he punish me if I am lying!" ⁷²Right then the rooster crowed again. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him earlier, "Before the rooster crows a second time, you will deny three times that you know me." When Peter realized that he had denied Jesus three times, he was extremely sad. Peter wept.

Chapter 15

¹Very early in the morning the chief priests met together with the rest of the Jewish council to decide how to accuse Jesus before the Roman governor. Their guards tied Jesus' hands again. They took him to the residence of Pilate, the governor. ²Pilate asked Jesus, "Do you say that you are the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "You yourself have said so." ³Then the chief priests claimed that Jesus had done many bad things. ⁴So Pilate asked him again, "Don't you have anything to say? Listen to how many bad things they are saying that you have done!" ⁵But {even though Jesus was not guilty,} he did not say anything more. The result was that Pilate was very much surprised.

⁶Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one person who was held in prison. He customarily released whichever prisoner the people requested. ⁷At that time there was a man called Barabbas {whom the soldiers had put} in prison with some other men. The men had murdered some soldiers during a rebellion against the Roman government. ⁸A crowd approached Pilate and asked him to release someone, just like he customarily did for them during the Passover celebration. ⁹Pilate replied to them, "Would you like me to release for you the man whom you Jewish people say is your king?" ¹⁰He asked this because he realized what the chief priests were wanting to do. They were accusing Jesus because they were jealous of him {because many people were becoming his disciples}. ¹¹But the chief priests urged the crowd to request that Pilate release Barabbas for them instead of Jesus. ¹²Once more, Pilate said to them, "If I release Barabbas, what do you want me to do with the man whom some of you Jews say is your king?" ¹³Then they shouted again, "Command your soldiers to crucify him!" ¹⁴Then Pilate said to them, "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted even louder, "Command your soldiers to crucify him!" ¹⁵So because Pilate wanted to please the crowd, he released Barabbas for them. Then, after his soldiers had whipped Jesus with leather straps into which they had fastened metal and bone pieces, Pilate told the soldiers to take Jesus away to crucify him.

¹⁶Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the palace where Pilate lived. That place was the government headquarters. Then they summoned the whole group of soldiers who were on duty there. ¹⁷After the soldiers gathered together, they put a purple robe on Jesus. Then they placed on his head a crown that they had woven from branches of thornbushes. {They did those things in order to ridicule him by pretending that they thought he was a king.} ¹⁸Then they greeted him like they would greet a king, again in order to ridicule him, saying, "Hooray for the King who rules the Jews!" ¹⁹They struck his head again and again with a heavy reed, and they spat on him. They knelt down in front of him to pretend to honor him. ²⁰When they had finished ridiculing him, they pulled off the purple robe. They put his own clothes on him, and then they led him outside of the city in order to nail him to a cross.

²¹After Jesus carried his cross a short distance, a man named Simon from the city of Cyrene came along. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was passing by while he was returning home from outside the city. The soldiers compelled Simon to carry the cross for Jesus, because Jesus was weakened by all the mistreatment he had received. ²²The soldiers brought them both to a place that they call Golgotha. That name means, "The Place of the Skull." ²³Then they tried to give Jesus wine that they had mixed with a medicine called myrrh, but he refused to drink it. ²⁴Some of the soldiers took his clothes. Then they nailed him to a cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling for them with something like dice. They did this to determine which piece of clothing each one would get.

²⁵It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶To the cross above Jesus' head they attached a sign on which someone had written the reason why they were nailing him to the cross. It said, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷They also nailed to other crosses two other prisoners who were bandits. They nailed one to a cross at the right side of Jesus and one to a cross at the left side of Jesus. ²⁸^[1] [And by crucifying him with robbers they fulfilled the scripture passage that says, 'And they considered him as being among wicked people.'] ²⁹The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads at him. They said, "Ha! You said that you would destroy the temple and then you would build it again within three days. ³⁰If you could do that, then rescue yourself by coming down from the cross!" ³¹The chief priests, along with the men who taught the Jewish laws, also wanted to make fun of Jesus. So they said to each other, "People claim that he has saved others from trouble, but he cannot save himself!

³²He claimed to be the Messiah and the king who rules the people of Israel. If his words are true, he should come down now from the cross! Then we will believe him!" The two men who were nailed onto crosses beside him also insulted him.

³³At noon the whole land became dark, and it stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ³⁴At three o'clock Jesus called out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ³⁵When some of the people who were standing there heard the word 'Eloi', they misunderstood it and said, "Listen! He is calling for the prophet Elijah!" ³⁶One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine. He placed it on the tip of a reed, and then held it up to try to get Jesus to suck out the wine that was in it. While he was doing that, someone said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah will come to take him down from the cross!" ³⁷And then, after Jesus shouted loudly, he stopped breathing and died. ³⁸At that moment the heavy, thick curtain that closed off the most holy place in the temple split into two pieces from top to bottom. ³⁹The officer who supervised the soldiers who had nailed Jesus to the cross was standing in front of Jesus. When he saw how Jesus had died, he exclaimed, "Certainly, this Jesus was God's Son!" ⁴⁰⁻⁴¹There were also some women there, watching what happened from further back. They had accompanied Jesus when he was in the district of Galilee, and they had provided what he needed. They, and many other women, had come with him to the city of Jerusalem. Among those women was Mary from the town of Magdala. There was another Mary, who was the mother of the younger James and of Josés. There was also Salome.

⁴²⁻⁴³When evening was near, a man named Joseph from a town called Arimathea came there. He was a member of the Jewish council, one whom everyone respected. He was also one of those who had been waiting expectantly for the time when God would send his king to begin to rule. {He knew that, according to Jewish law, a body must be buried on the day the person died. He also realized that it was the Day of Preparation, the day when people prepared things for the Jewish day of rest, and that the Jewish day of rest would start when the sun set.} Evening was now approaching. Courageously, he went to Pilate and asked his permission to take the body of Jesus down from the cross and bury it immediately. ⁴⁴Pilate was surprised when he heard that Jesus was already dead. So he summoned the officer who was in charge of the soldiers who had crucified Jesus, and he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵When the officer told Pilate that Jesus had died, Pilate allowed Joseph to take away the body. ⁴⁶After Joseph had bought a linen cloth, he and others took Jesus' body down from the cross. They wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that previously had been hewn out of the rock cliff. Then they rolled a huge flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. ⁴⁷Mary from Magdala and Mary the mother of Josés were watching where they placed Jesus' body.

15:28 ^[1]

Chapter 16

¹On Saturday evening when the Jewish day of rest had ended, Mary from Magdala, Mary the mother of the younger James, and Salome bought fragrant ointments to be used for anointing Jesus' body. {These women wanted to follow this Jewish burial custom}. ²Very early on Sunday, the first day of the week, just after the sun rose, they went to the tomb with the fragrant ointments. ³On their way, they were asking each other, "Who will help us by rolling away for us the heavy stone that closes the opening of the tomb?" ⁴Arriving, they looked up and were surprised to see that someone had rolled away the stone, because it was very large. ⁵They entered the tomb and saw a young man. He was wearing a white robe and he was sitting at the right side of the cave. The sight alarmed them! ⁶The young man said to them, "Do not be alarmed! I know that you are looking for Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, the one they nailed to a cross. But he has become alive again! He is not here! Look! Here is the place where they placed his body. ⁷But, instead of remaining here, go and tell his apprentices! Particularly, be sure that you tell Peter. Tell them, 'Jesus is going ahead of you to the district of Galilee, and you will see him there, just like he told you previously'." ⁸The women went outside and ran from the tomb. They were trembling because they were afraid, and they were astonished. But they did not say anything to anyone about this, because they were afraid.

⁹^[1] [When Jesus became alive again early on Sunday morning, the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary from the town of Magdala. She was the woman from whom he had previously forced out seven evil spirits. ¹⁰She went to those who had been with Jesus, while they were mourning and crying. She told them what she had seen. ¹¹But when she told them that Jesus was alive again and that she had seen him, they refused to believe what she said. ¹²Later that day, Jesus appeared to two of his followers while they were walking from Jerusalem to their homes in the surrounding area. They did not recognize him quickly because he looked very different. ¹³{After they recognized him,} those two went back to Jerusalem. They told his other followers what had happened, but they did not believe what they heard. ¹⁴Later Jesus appeared to the eleven apprentices while they were eating. He scolded them severely, because they had stubbornly refused to believe the reports of those who saw him after he had become alive again.

¹⁵He said to them, "Go into the whole world and preach the good news to everyone! ¹⁶God will save everyone who believes your message and who is baptized. But everyone who does not believe your message God will condemn. ¹⁷Those who believe the good news will perform miracles. Specifically, by my power they will force evil spirits out of people. They will speak in languages that they have not learned. ¹⁸As they pick up a snake or if they drink any poisonous liquid, they will not be hurt. God will heal sick people on whom they lay their hands."

¹⁹After the Lord Jesus had said this to his apprentices, God took him up into heaven. Then Jesus sat down on his throne beside God's right hand, the place of highest honor, to rule with him. ²⁰As for the apprentices, they went out from Jerusalem, and then they preached everywhere. Wherever they went, the Lord enabled them to perform miracles. By doing that, he showed people that God's message is true.]

16:9 ^[1]

Luke

Chapter 1

¹Many people have already been writing about the things that happened among us. ²They have been recording what the people who saw these things happen told us about them. Those people were there from the time when everything first started happening, and they have been sharing the story ever since. ³I myself have carefully investigated everything that happened from the very beginning. So I decided that I should also write an accurate account for you. Your Excellency, Theophilus, ⁴I want you to know that what people have told you about Jesus is true.

⁵When Herod was the ruler of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a descendant of Abijah, and so he took his turn serving in the temple with other priests who were also descendants of Abijah. His wife was named Elizabeth. She was a descendant of Aaron, and so she was also from the priestly line. ⁶God considered that both of them were righteous because they always obeyed everything that the Lord had commanded. ⁷But they did not have any children, because Elizabeth had been unable to bear children. And now she and her husband were too old to have children.

⁸The time came for Zechariah's group of priests to take its turn {serving in Jerusalem}. So Zechariah was there working as a priest for God. ⁹The priests chose Zechariah to go into the Lord's temple and burn incense there. They chose him in their usual way, by casting lots {to determine whom God wanted to perform a particular task}.

¹⁰When it was time to burn the incense, many people were praying {in the courtyard} outside {the temple}. ¹¹Just then, an angel of the Lord came to Zechariah. He stood at the right side of the altar where he was burning incense.

¹²When Zechariah saw the angel, he became agitated and terrified. ¹³But the angel said to him, "There is no reason to be afraid {of me}, Zechariah. You have been praying, and God is going to answer your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son for you. Give him the name John. ¹⁴You will be very happy, and many other people will also be happy when he is born. ¹⁵You and they will be happy because your son will be very influential for God. He must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink. The Holy Spirit will begin to influence him even before he is born.

¹⁶Your son will persuade many of the Israelites to stop sinning and to start obeying the Lord their God again.

¹⁷Your son will go in advance of the Lord and he will be powerful in his spirit like the prophet Elijah was. He will cause parents to love their children again. He will cause many people who do not obey God to want to obey him and to live wisely and righteously. He will do this so that the Lord's people will be ready for him when he comes."

¹⁸Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure that the things you have said will really happen? I am very old, and my wife is also very old, so it is difficult for me to believe that they will happen}."

¹⁹Then the angel replied to him, "I am Gabriel! I stand in God's presence! God sent me to tell you this good news about what will happen to you. ²⁰Now listen! What I have told you will certainly happen at the time that God has decided. But since you did not believe my message, God will keep you from talking. You will not be able to speak until the day that your son is born!"

²¹{While Zechariah and the angel were talking in the temple,} the people in the courtyard were waiting for Zechariah to come out. They wondered why he was staying in the temple for such a long time. ²²Then he came out of the temple, but he was not able to speak to them. Because he could not talk, he made motions with his hands to try to explain what had happened. This made the people conclude that he had seen a vision from God while he was in the temple.

²³When Zechariah finished the time he needed to work as a priest in the temple, he left Jerusalem and went back to his home.

²⁴Some time after this, his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant, and she did not go out in public for five months. She said to herself, ²⁵"The Lord has enabled me to become pregnant. In this way, he has shown compassion to me. Thanks to him, I no longer have to feel ashamed around other people."

²⁶When Elizabeth had been pregnant for six months, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town called Nazareth in the district of Galilee. ²⁷God sent him there to speak to a virgin whose name was Mary. {Her parents had promised that} she would marry a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. ²⁸The angel came to where Mary was and said to her, "Hello, blessed one! You are very special to the Lord!" ²⁹But when he said this, she was confused. She had to try to understand what this greeting could mean. ³⁰Then the angel said to her, "God desires to bless you, Mary, so do not be afraid! ³¹Now listen. You will become pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. Give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great, and he will be the Son of God Most High. God the Lord will make him king over his people, just as his ancestor David was. ³³He will always be the king over the people of Israel. He will rule over them forever!"

³⁴Then Mary said to the angel, "But I am a virgin. So how can this happen?" ³⁵The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of God Most High will be like a shadow falling on you. So the baby you give birth to will be holy. He will be the Son of God. ³⁶Also listen to this. Your relative Elizabeth is also pregnant, and she is going to have a son. Because she is very old, people thought that she could not bear children. But she has been pregnant now for almost six months. ³⁷So you see, God can do anything!" ³⁸Then Mary said, "All right. I am willing to obey the Lord. God can make the things you have described happen to me." Then the angel left her.

³⁹Very soon after that, Mary got ready and traveled as quickly as she could to the city where Zechariah lived, which was in the highlands of Judea. ⁴⁰She entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth, his wife. ⁴¹As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary greet her, the baby inside Elizabeth suddenly moved. Immediately the Holy Spirit inspired Elizabeth to speak. ⁴²She exclaimed loudly to Mary, "God has blessed you more than he has blessed any other woman, and he has blessed the baby you will bear! ⁴³I am not worthy of this, that you, the mother of my Lord, should come to visit me! ⁴⁴I know all of this because as soon as I heard you greet me, the baby in my womb started moving around because he was so excited! ⁴⁵You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord told you would come true."

⁴⁶Then Mary praised God by saying:

"Oh, how I praise the Lord

⁴⁷and I feel very joyful about God,

the one who saves me!

⁴⁸I am happy because he was gracious to me, even though I was not very important.

Just imagine this—from now on, people living at all times in the future will say that God has blessed me.

⁴⁹They will say this because God, the Powerful and Holy One, has done great things for me.

⁵⁰He acts mercifully throughout all time periods to the people who revere him.

⁵¹He has shown people that he is very powerful.

He has routed those who think proudly within themselves.

⁵²He has made rulers stop ruling,

but he has honored people who are lowly.

⁵³He has let people who were hungry eat good food until they were full,

but he has sent rich people away without giving them anything.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵He has helped Israel, the people who serve him.

Long ago he promised our ancestors that he would be merciful to them.

He has kept that promise and has always acted mercifully toward Abraham and all who descended from him."

⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. After that, she went back home.

⁵⁷When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth to her child, she bore a son. ⁵⁸When her neighbors and relatives heard about how kind the Lord had been to her by giving her a son, they were very happy along with Elizabeth.

⁵⁹Eight days later, people gathered together for the ceremony to circumcise the baby {to show that he belonged to God}. {This was also the time to give the baby a name.} The people wanted to name the baby Zechariah because that was his father's name. ⁶⁰But his mother said, "No, {his name will not be Zechariah.} His name will be John!"

⁶¹So they said to her, "But John is not the name of any of your relatives!" ⁶²Then they made motions with their hands to his father, asking him to indicate what name he wanted to give to his son. ⁶³So he signaled that they should give him a tablet to write on. {When they gave him one,} he wrote on it, "His name is John." This amazed all of the people who were there! ⁶⁴Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

⁶⁵{When} the people who lived nearby {heard about these things, they} felt a deep reverence for God. {They told many other people about what had happened,} and this news spread to people throughout the highlands of Judea.

⁶⁶Everyone who heard about these things kept thinking about them. They thought, "Certainly this child will grow up to be someone very special!" {They thought this} because {they could see that} the Lord was present in his life in a powerful way. ⁶⁷After the child's father, Zechariah, could speak again, the Holy Spirit inspired Zechariah and he spoke these words from God:

⁶⁸"Praise the Lord, the God whom we people of Israel worship,
because he has come to set us, his people, free.

⁶⁹He has sent someone who will powerfully save us,
someone who is descended from David, whom he chose to be king.

⁷⁰{Long ago God inspired his prophets to say that he would do these things.}

⁷¹{God is sending this deliverer} to save us from our enemies,
and {he will rescue us} from the power of everyone who hates us.

⁷²God has done this because he is faithful to our ancestors and so he is keeping the holy promise that he made to them.

⁷³This is the promise that he solemnly swore to our ancestor Abraham about what he would do for us.

⁷⁴He promised that he would rescue us from the power of our enemies
so that we could serve him without being afraid of them.

⁷⁵As a result, we could live in the right way, as people who completely belong to him, for as long as we live."

⁷⁶{Then Zechariah said to his baby son,}

"And as for you, my child, you will be a prophet
of the Most High God.

You will begin your work before the Lord comes

so that you can prepare the people to be ready for him.

⁷⁷You will tell God's people that he wants to save them by forgiving their sins.

⁷⁸God wants to save us because he is compassionate and merciful.

That is why he is sending this Savior from heaven to help us.

⁷⁹This Savior will show the truth to those who do not know it, even to those who do not know it at all. He will show us how to live in a way that pleases God."

⁸⁰Over time, Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby boy grew up and became spiritually strong. Then he went to live in a desolate region. He was still living there when he began to preach publicly to God's people, Israel.

Chapter 2

¹Also during that time, Caesar Augustus{, who ruled over the whole Roman Empire,} commanded that every person living in his empire had to register {his name in an official list of the people who lived there}. ²This was the first time that the Romans recorded the names of everyone living in their empire. They did this during the time when Quirinius was the governor of the province of Syria. ³So everyone had to go to his family's hometown to register. ⁴⁻⁵Joseph also traveled to his family's hometown, along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, they left the town of Nazareth in the region of Galilee and traveled to the region of Judea, to the town of Bethlehem, which is also known as the city of David. Joseph and Mary went there to be registered in the public record. ⁶⁻⁷When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay in a place where visitors usually stayed. So they had to stay in a place where animals slept overnight. While they were there the time came for Mary to give birth and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in wide strips of cloth and laid him down where the food was kept for the animals inside the barn.

⁸There were some shepherds camping out in the open country near Bethlehem that night. They were there taking care of their sheep. ⁹Suddenly they saw an angel from the Lord standing in front of them. A glorious light from the Lord shone all over them. They became very afraid. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, because I have come to tell you very good news! This news is for all people, and should make everyone rejoice!

¹¹They will rejoice because today, in Bethlehem, King David's hometown, the person was born who will save you {from your sins}! He is the Messiah, the Lord! ¹²And here is a sign for you. {If you go to Bethlehem,} you will find a baby there wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding place for animals."

¹³Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven appeared with the other angel. They were all praising God by saying,

¹⁴"In the highest heaven may all the angels praise God! And on the earth may all the people who please God be peaceful {with God and each other}!"

¹⁵When the angels left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "We should go right now to Bethlehem and see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!" ¹⁶So they went quickly, and when they had found {the place where} Mary and Joseph {were staying}, they saw the baby lying in a feeding place for animals. ¹⁷After they had seen him, they told everyone what the Lord had revealed to them about this baby. ¹⁸All the people who were listening thought that what the shepherds told them was amazing. ¹⁹But Mary carefully remembered all of these things and thought about them continually. ²⁰The shepherds returned {to the fields where their sheep were}. They kept talking about how great God is and praising him for all of the things that they had heard and seen. Everything had been exactly as the angel had told them it would be.

²¹On the eighth day after the baby was born, they circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name that the angel had told them to give him even before Mary had become pregnant with him.

²²Mary and Joseph waited the number of days that the law of Moses required for her to become ceremonially clean again after having a baby. Then they brought him to Jerusalem so that they could dedicate him to the Lord {in the temple}. ²³They did this to obey the law of the Lord, which says, "You must set apart for the Lord every male offspring who is the first to be born." ²⁴There they offered the sacrifice that the law of the Lord told the parents of a newborn son to offer, "two turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵At that time there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He did what was pleasing to God and obeyed God's laws. He was eagerly waiting for God to send the Messiah to encourage the people of Israel. The Holy Spirit was directing him. ²⁶The Holy Spirit had previously revealed to him that before he died, the Lord would send the Messiah and he would get to see him. ²⁷So the Holy Spirit led Simeon to go into the temple courtyard. He was there when Joseph and Mary brought in the baby Jesus so that they could perform the ceremony for him that God had commanded in the law. ²⁸{When Simeon saw Jesus,} he picked him up in his arms and thanked God, and then he said,

²⁹"Lord, you have kept your promise to me, and now I am content for you to let me die.

³⁰Because I have seen the one whom you have sent to save people,

³¹the one whom you have prepared for all people to see.

³²He will be like a light that will reveal your truth to the other nations. He will show how glorious your plan is for Israel, your people."

³³Jesus' father and mother marveled at what Simeon said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Jesus' mother, Mary, "Note well what I say: God has determined that, because of this child, many people in Israel will reject God and many will submit themselves to God. He will be a sign {from God} that many people will oppose.

³⁵As for you, {the cruel things that people will do to him will make you so sad that} it will feel as if a sword is piercing through your very soul. {But this is necessary} so that he can reveal the secret thoughts of many people."

³⁶A prophetess named Anna was also there {in the temple courtyard}. She was very old. She was the daughter of Phanuel, who was from the tribe of Asher. As a young woman, she had been married for seven years{, and then her husband had died}. ³⁷After that, she had lived as a widow for 84 more years. It seemed as if she was always in the temple, worshiping God by fasting and praying, {at all times of the} night and day. ³⁸At that same time, Anna approached {Joseph and Mary and the baby}. Anna began thanking God {for the baby}. Afterwards, she kept speaking about Jesus to many other people who were also expecting {God to send} the Messiah who would set the people of Israel free.

³⁹After Joseph and Mary had finished doing everything that the law of the Lord required {for parents of a first son}, they returned to their own town, Nazareth, in the district of Galilee. ⁴⁰As the child grew up, he became strong and very wise, and God was present in his life.

⁴¹Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. ⁴²So when Jesus was 12 years old, they all traveled to Jerusalem together when it was time for the {Passover} festival. ⁴³When the days for celebrating the festival ended, Jesus' parents started to return home, but their son, Jesus, stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know {that he was still there}. ⁴⁴They thought that he was with the other people who were traveling with them. But after walking for one day, they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶Three days after {Mary and Joseph had left Jerusalem}, they found Jesus at the temple. He was sitting among the Jewish religious teachers. He was listening to them teach and he was asking them questions. ⁴⁷All the people who heard what he said were amazed at how much he understood and how well he answered {the questions that the teachers asked}. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were very surprised. His mother said to him, "My son, you should not have done this to us. Listen to me! Your father and I have been very worried as we have been searching for you!" ⁴⁹He said to them, "I am surprised that you needed to search for me. I thought you would know that I needed to be at my Father's house{, learning about him}." ⁵⁰But they did not understand the meaning of what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he

returned with them to Nazareth, and he always obeyed them. His mother kept thinking deeply about all the things that had happened.

⁵²As the years passed, Jesus continued to become wiser, and he grew taller. God and people continued to approve of him more and more.

Chapter 3

¹{This next part of the history happened} when Tiberius Caesar had been ruling {the Roman Empire} for about fifteen years. At that time, Pontius Pilate was the governor of the province of Judea, Herod Antipas was ruling the district of Galilee, his brother Philip was ruling the regions of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanius was ruling the region of Abilene. ²The high priests {at the temple in Jerusalem} were Annas and Caiaphas. During that time, God spoke to Zechariah's son John {while he was living} out in the desolate area. ³John traveled all around the area near the Jordan River. He kept announcing {to the people who came to hear him}, "If you want God to forgive your sins, you must reject wrong ways of living. Then I will baptize you!" ⁴{When John preached like this,} the words came true that the prophet Isaiah wrote on a scroll long ago:

"In the desolate place, someone will be calling out {to the people}:

'Prepare yourselves to receive the Lord!

Make yourselves ready for when he comes!'

⁵{When an important person is going to arrive by a certain road,} people fill in all the ravines and level off all the steep places in it.

They make the road straight wherever it is crooked,

and they smooth out all the bumps. {In the same way, God will make sure that there will be people who are ready for the Messiah.}

⁶Then everyone will recognize God's way of saving people."

⁷Large groups of people were coming out {to the desolate place where John was} so that he would baptize them. So John said to them, "You people are sneaky and dangerous like poisonous snakes! You think that if I baptize you, God will spare you when he punishes sinners. {But I did not say that!}" ⁸You need to do the things that show that you have truly rejected your previous sinful way of living! And do not even begin to say to yourselves, '{Certainly God will not punish us, because} we are descendants of Abraham!' {That does not impress God.} Let me assure you, God could turn these stones into descendants of Abraham! ⁹You are like fruit trees that do not produce good fruit. God is like a man who is positioning the head of his axe at the base of those trees, ready to chop them down and throw them into the fire. God is ready to punish you like that if you continue sinning." ¹⁰Then {several of the people in} the crowd asked him, "What kinds of things, then, does God want us to do?" ¹¹He answered them, "If any of you has two shirts, you should give one of them to someone who does not have a shirt. If any of you has plenty of food, you should give some to those who do not have food." ¹²Some tax collectors also came, wanting John to baptize them. They asked him, "Teacher, what {does God want us} to do?" ¹³He said to them, "Do not collect more money {from the people} than the Roman government tells you to collect!" ¹⁴There were also some men there who were soldiers. Even they asked him, "And what about us? What does God want us to do?" He said to them, "Do not force people to give you money by threatening to harm them or by falsely accusing them {of doing something wrong}. Be content with the amount of money that you earn as a soldier." ¹⁵People had been waiting {for a long time for the Messiah to come. But now they were getting very hopeful about John}. They thought that he might be the Messiah. ¹⁶But John said to all of them, "{I am not the Messiah.} He is coming, and he is far greater than I am. He is so great that I am not worthy even to be like the slave who would untie the straps of his sandals {when he comes in the house}! When I baptized you, I used only water. But {when the Messiah comes,} he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, who will judge and purify you. ¹⁷{The Messiah is ready to do this, just like} a farmer who has

his winnowing fork ready to use. A farmer separates all the good grain from the useless chaff. He stores the grain safely in his barn, but he burns the chaff until it is all gone. {That represents how the Messiah will gather up the people who are pleasing to God, and he will punish the people who are displeasing to God.}” ¹⁸In many different ways like this, John urged the people {to stop sinning and to submit themselves to God}, as he kept telling them the good news {from God}. ¹⁹John even rebuked King Herod for all of the many evil things that Herod had done. But when John rebuked Herod for marrying his brother’s wife, Herodias, while his brother was still alive, ²⁰Herod did another evil thing. He had his soldiers put John in prison. ²¹But before Herod did that, while John was still baptizing many people, John also baptized Jesus. Afterwards, while Jesus was praying, the sky opened. ²²Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came down and landed on Jesus. Then God spoke {to Jesus} from heaven. He said, “You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you!” ²³At that time Jesus began his work for God. He was about 30 years old. This is Jesus’ lineage: People considered Jesus to be the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Heli. ²⁴Heli was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. Levi was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Jannai. Jannai was the son of Joseph. ²⁵Joseph was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Amos. Amos was the son of Nahum. Nahum was the son of Esli. Esli was the son of Naggai. ²⁶Naggai was the son of Maath. Maath was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Semein. Semein was the son of Josech. Josech was the son of Joda. ²⁷Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri. ²⁸Neri was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Addi. Addi was the son of Cosam. Cosam was the son of Elmadam. Elmadam was the son of Er. ²⁹Er was the son of Joshua. Joshua was the son of Eliezer. Eliezer was the son of Jorim. Jorim was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. ³⁰Levi was the son of Simeon. Simeon was the son of Judah. Judah was the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jonam. Jonam was the son of Eliakim. ³¹Eliakim was the son of Melea. Melea was the son of Menna. Menna was the son of Mattatha. Mattatha was the son of Nathan. Nathan was the son of David. ³²David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed. Obed was the son of Boaz. Boaz was the son of Salmon. Salmon was the son of Nahshon. ³³Nahshon was the son of Amminadab. Amminadab was the son of Admin. Admin was the son of Arni. Arni was the son of Hezron. Hezron was the son of Perez. Perez was the son of Judah. ³⁴Judah was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of Isaac. Isaac was the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Terah. Terah was the son of Nahor. ³⁵Nahor was the son of Serug. Serug was the son of Reu. Reu was the son of Peleg. Peleg was the son of Eber. Eber was the son of Shelah. ³⁶Shelah was the son of Cainan. Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. Arphaxad was the son of Shem. Shem was the son of Noah. Noah was the son of Lamech. ³⁷Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Methuselah was the son of Enoch. Enoch was the son of Jared. Jared was the son of Mahalalel. Mahalalel was the son of Cainan. ³⁸Cainan was the son of Enos. Enos was the son of Seth. Seth was the son of Adam. Adam came from God.

Chapter 4

¹After John baptized him, Jesus came back out of the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit was fully empowering him. Then the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness. ²Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. While he was there, the devil kept tempting him. During that entire time, Jesus did not eat anything. So when the 40 days were over, he was very hungry. ³Then the devil said to Jesus, “If you really are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread {for you to eat}!” ⁴Jesus replied, “{No, I will not do that, because} the Scriptures say, ‘People need more than just food in order to live.’” ⁵Then the devil took Jesus up {to the top of a high mountain} and showed him all the nations of the world in an instant. ⁶Then the devil said to Jesus, “I will make you the ruler over all of these nations and you will possess all of their wealth. I can do this because God has permitted me to control all of them, and so I can give them to whomever I wish. ⁷All you have to do is bow down and worship me. Then I will let you rule them all!” ⁸But Jesus replied, “{No, I will not worship you, because} the Scriptures say, ‘You must only worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you may serve!’”

⁹Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem. He set him on the highest part of the temple and said to him, “If you really are the Son of God, jump down from here. ¹⁰You will not be hurt, because the Scriptures say,

'God will command his angels to protect you.' ¹¹And the Scriptures also say,

'The angels will hold you up in their hands when you are falling, so that you will not get hurt.'" ¹²But Jesus replied, "{No, I will not do that, because} the Scriptures also say: 'Do not test the Lord your God'."

¹³Then, after the devil had finished trying to tempt Jesus in all of these ways, the devil left Jesus to wait until another time {when he could try to tempt Jesus again}.

¹⁴After this, Jesus {left the desolate area and} returned to the district of Galilee. The Holy Spirit was empowering him. Throughout that whole region, people heard about Jesus and told others about him. ¹⁵He taught people in their Jewish meeting places. {As a result,} all of the people praised him.

¹⁶Then Jesus went to Nazareth, the town where he had grown up. As he usually did on the Jewish day of rest, he went to the Jewish meeting place. {At the appropriate time,} he stood up to read {something aloud from the Scriptures}. ¹⁷{Jesus wanted to read some of the words that} the prophet Isaiah {had spoken long ago. So he asked for} the scroll that contained these words, and a synagogue attendant handed it to him. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place from which he wanted to read. {He read these words:}

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is empowering me,

because he has specially appointed me to declare God's good news to people who are poor.

He has sent me to declare to people who are in prison that they will go free,

and to tell those who are blind that they will see again.

He has sent me to release people whom others are oppressing,

¹⁹and to announce that now is the time when the Lord will act favorably toward people."

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and he sat down {to teach the people}. Everyone in the Jewish meeting place was looking intently at him. ²¹He began to teach them by saying, "I have made this Scripture passage come true right now, as you heard me read it." ²²Everyone there approved of him and they were amazed at the wonderful things that he said. Many of them said to each other, "{It is surprising that he can speak like this!} This man is only Joseph's son!" ²³He said to them, "Surely some of you will quote to me the proverb that says, 'Doctor, heal yourself!' {What you will mean by it is, 'People told us that} you did miracles in the town of Capernaum. {If you want us to believe that you are a prophet, then} do the same kind of miracles here in your hometown!'" ²⁴Then he said, "It is certainly true that the people in a prophet's own hometown do not accept that he is a prophet. ²⁵Think about this: There were many widows in Israel during the time when the prophet Elijah lived. At that time there was no rain for three and a half years. This caused a great famine throughout the whole country.

²⁶And yet God did not send Elijah to help any of the widows in Israel. Instead, God sent him to the town of Zarephath near the city of Sidon, to help a {non-Israelite} widow there. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel during the time when the prophet Elisha lived. But Elisha did not heal any of them. Instead, he healed only Naaman, {a non-Israelite man} from the country of Syria." ²⁸When all the people in the Jewish meeting place heard him say those things, they became very angry. ²⁹So they stood up, grabbed Jesus, and dragged him out of the city. They took him to the edge of the cliff outside of their city in order to throw him off of the cliff and kill him. ³⁰But Jesus simply walked through the crowd and went away.

³¹From there Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city in the district of Galilee. On each Jewish day of rest, he taught the people {in the Jewish meeting place there}. ³²The things that Jesus taught the people amazed them, because he spoke as someone who knew what he was talking about. ³³Now in that Jewish meeting place there was a man whom an evil spirit controlled. He shouted very loudly, ³⁴"Aah! Jesus, from Nazareth! What do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are the Holy One from God!" ³⁵But Jesus spoke sternly to the evil spirit. He said, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The evil spirit threw the man down on the ground in the

middle of the people. But then he came out of the man, without harming him. ³⁶All of the people {in the Jewish meeting place} were amazed. Many of them said to each other, "We have never seen anything like this! His words are so powerful! He commands the evil spirits as if they must obey him, and {when he commands them,} they come out {of people}!" ³⁷In every place throughout the surrounding region, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

³⁸Then Jesus left the Jewish meeting place and went to the house of a man named Simon. His mother-in-law was there. She was sick and had a high fever. The people there asked Jesus to heal her. ³⁹So Jesus went over to where she was and stood next to her. He commanded the fever to leave her, and it did! She immediately got up and served them some food.

⁴⁰When the sun was setting{, which ended the Jewish day of rest}, many people whose friends or relatives were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus. He put his hands on each one of them and healed them. ⁴¹{As Jesus put his hands on the sick people,} evil spirits also came out from many of them. {As the evil spirits came out,} they shouted {to Jesus}, "You are the Son of God!" But he commanded those evil spirits not to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

⁴²Early the next morning, Jesus went out to an uninhabited place. Crowds of people went looking for him. When they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³But Jesus said to them, "I must also tell people in other cities the good news that they can have God rule their lives, because that is what God sent me here to do." ⁴⁴So he went on preaching in the Jewish meeting places throughout the province of Judea.

Chapter 5

¹One day while many people were crowding around Jesus and listening to him teach God's message, he was standing next to Lake Gennesaret. ²He saw two fishing boats there at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left the boats and were washing their fishing nets. ³Jesus stepped into one of the two boats, the one that belonged to Simon. Jesus asked him to move the boat out a short distance away from the shore. Then Jesus sat down in the boat and continued to teach the crowds from there. ⁴After he finished teaching them, he said to Simon, "Take the boat out to deeper water and let your nets down into the water to catch some fish." ⁵Simon replied, "Master, we worked hard through the whole night and yet we did not catch any fish. But I will let down the nets again because you told me to." ⁶So Simon and his crew let down their nets and they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷They motioned to their fishing partners in the other boat to come and help them. So they came and filled both boats so full with fish that the boats began to sink. ⁸Seeing this, Simon Peter bowed down before Jesus and said, "Please leave me, because I am a sinful man, Lord." ⁹{He said this} because he marveled at the huge number of fish that they had caught. All the men who were with him also marveled. ¹⁰James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners, were just as amazed. But Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid! {Until now you gathered in fish, but} from now on you will gather in people to become my disciples." ¹¹So after the men brought the boats to the shore, they left their fishing business and everything else and went with Jesus.

¹²Jesus went to one of the towns nearby. There was a man there who was covered with a skin disease. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down to the ground in front of him. He pleaded with him, "Lord, {please heal me!} I know that you are able to heal me if you are willing!" ¹³Then Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. He said, "I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!" Immediately the man was healed. He no longer had leprosy! ¹⁴Then Jesus told him, "Do not tell anyone that I healed you. First, go and show yourself to a priest so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Bring the sacrifice that Moses commanded you to offer to become ceremonially clean again." ¹⁵But instead even more people heard {about how Jesus had healed the man}. As a result, large crowds came to hear {Jesus teach} and to have him heal them from their sicknesses. ¹⁶But he would often go away from them to isolated areas and pray.

¹⁷One day when Jesus was teaching, some men from the Pharisee sect and some expert teachers of the Jewish law were sitting nearby. They had come from many villages in the district of Galilee and also from Jerusalem and other cities in the province of Judea. At that same time, the Lord was giving Jesus the power to heal people. ¹⁸While Jesus was there, several men brought him a man who was paralyzed. They were carrying the man on a sleeping pad and trying to bring him into the house to lay him down in front of Jesus. ¹⁹But because there was such a large crowd of people in the house, they were not able to bring him in. So they went up {the outside steps} onto the flat roof. {They removed some of the tiles from the roof to make an opening.} Then they lowered the man on his sleeping pad through the opening into the middle {of the crowd}. He came down right in front of Jesus. ²⁰When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the man, he said to him, "Friend, I forgive your sins!" ²¹The teachers of the law and the Pharisees began to think to themselves, "This man insults God by saying that! Nobody except God can forgive sins!" ²²Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "You should not question what I said within yourselves!" ²³Here is something I want you to think carefully about. Which is easier to say, 'I forgive your sins,' or, 'Get up and walk'? {You might think that saying 'I forgive your sins' is easier because it does not require any visible proof.} ²⁴But I want you to know that God has given me, the Son of Man, authority to forgive people on earth their sins. {To demonstrate that, I will also tell this man to get up.} Then he said to the man who was paralyzed, "To you I say, get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!" ²⁵Immediately {the man was healed!} He got up in front of them all. He picked up the sleeping pad on which he had been lying, and he went home, praising God. ²⁶All the people there were astonished! They praised God and were completely amazed {at what they had seen Jesus do}. They kept saying, "We have seen wonderful things today!"

²⁷Then Jesus left that place and saw a man named Levi who collected taxes {for the Roman government}. He was sitting in the booth {where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required}. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" ²⁸So Levi left his work and went with Jesus.

²⁹Later on Levi prepared a big feast in his own house for Jesus {and his disciples}. There was a large group of tax collectors and others eating together with them. ³⁰Then some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect, including some of them who taught Jewish laws, complained to Jesus' disciples. They said, "You should not be having a banquet with tax collectors and {other} sinners." ³¹Then Jesus said to them, "People who are well do not need a doctor. People who are sick need a doctor. ³²Similarly, I did not come from heaven to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. On the contrary, I came to invite those who know that they are sinners to turn from their sinful behavior and come to me."

³³Those Jewish leaders responded to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptizer often abstain from food and pray. The disciples of the Pharisees do that too. But your disciples keep on eating and drinking! Why do they not fast like the others?" ³⁴Jesus answered, "No one tells the friends of the bridegroom to fast while the wedding celebration is still going on! ³⁵But some day the bridegroom will no longer be with his friends. Then, at that time, they will abstain from food."

³⁶Then Jesus gave other examples to explain what he meant. He said, "People never tear a piece of cloth from a new garment and attach it to an old garment to mend it. If they did that, they would ruin the new garment by tearing it, and the piece of cloth from the new garment would not match the old garment. ³⁷And no one puts newly squeezed wine into old skin bags {to store it}. If anyone did that, the skin bags would tear open {because they would not stretch when the new wine fermented and expanded}. Then the skin bags would become useless, and the wine {would also become useless because it} would spill out. ³⁸On the contrary, new wine must be put into new skin bags.

³⁹Those who have only drunk old wine do not want to try new wine, because they think, 'The old wine is good enough!'"

Chapter 6

¹One Sabbath day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields, the disciples picked some heads of grain. They rubbed them in their hands to separate the grain from the husks. Then they ate the grain.

²Some Pharisees {were watching this. They} said {to them}, "You should not be doing work like that! Our law forbids us to do work on the Sabbath day!" ³Jesus replied to the Pharisees, "Consider what the Scriptures say about what David did when he and the men who were with him were hungry. ⁴As you know, David entered the tabernacle {and asked for some food}. The priest gave him the bread that had been on display before God. David ate some, and he also gave some to the men who were with him, even though the law said they could not do that. Only priests could eat that bread." ⁵Jesus also said to them, "I, the Son of Man, have the authority {to determine what is right for people to do} on the Sabbath!"

⁶On another Sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue and taught {the people}. A man was there who could not move his right hand. ⁷Some teachers of the Jewish laws and some Pharisees {were there. They} were watching Jesus closely. They wanted to see whether he would heal the man. If he did, then they would accuse him {of disobeying their laws about not working on the Sabbath}. ⁸But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here in front of everyone!" So the man got up and stood there.

⁹Then Jesus said to them, "I want to ask you a question. Do the laws that God gave Moses command people to do good on the Sabbath, or to do harm? Do they command people to save a life on the Sabbath, or to destroy it?"

¹⁰{No one answered him, so} he looked around at them all and then said to the man, "Stretch out your withered hand!" The man did that, and his hand became completely well again! ¹¹But the religious leaders were very angry, and they discussed with one another about what they could do to {get rid of} Jesus.

¹²Around that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray. He prayed to God all night there. ¹³The next day he called all his disciples to come to him. From among them he chose 12 men and made them his Representatives. ¹⁴{These are their names:} Simon, to whom Jesus gave the new name Peter; Andrew, Peter's brother; James and his brother, John; Philip; Bartholomew; ¹⁵Matthew{, whose other name was Levi}; Thomas; another man named James whose father was named Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; ¹⁶Judas, the son of a different man named James; and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

¹⁷Jesus came down from the hills with his disciples and stood on a level area. There was a great crowd of his disciples there. There was also a large group of people who had come from Jerusalem and from many other places in the region of Judea, and from the coastal areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They came to hear Jesus {teach them} and heal them from their diseases. He also healed those whom evil spirits had troubled. ¹⁹Everyone in the crowd tried to touch him, because he was healing everyone by his power. ²⁰Then he looked at his disciples and said, "It is very good for you who are poor, because God is ruling you. ²¹It is very good for you who are hungry now, because God will give you everything you need.

It is very good for you who are grieving now, because God will someday make you laugh with joy.

²²It is very good when other people hate you, when they reject you and insult you and say that you are bad because you follow me, the Son of Man. ²³When that happens, rejoice! Jump up and down because you are so happy! Keep in mind that God is going to give you a great reward in heaven! Do not forget that the ancestors of the people who are treating you this way did similar things to God's prophets {long ago}.

²⁴But how sad it is for you who are rich. You have {already} received all the comfort you are going to get {from your riches}. ²⁵How sad it is for you who can stuff yourselves with food now. Later you will go hungry.

Woe to the ones who are laughing now. Later you will be very unhappy. ²⁶How sad it is for you when everyone says good things about you. In the same way, their ancestors used to say good things about people who falsely claimed to be God's prophets.

²⁷But I say this to each of you who are listening to what I say: Love your enemies{, not only your friends}! Do good things for those who hate you! ²⁸Ask God to bless those who curse you! Pray for those who treat you badly! ²⁹If someone {insults you by} striking you on one of your cheeks, turn your face so that he can strike the other cheek also. If someone wants to take away your coat, let him also have your shirt. ³⁰Give something to everyone who asks you. If someone takes things that belong to you, do not make him return them. ³¹In whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way that you should act toward them.

³²If you love {only} those who love you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even sinners love those who love them. ³³Do not expect God to reward you because you do good things for people who do good things for you. After all, even sinners do that. ³⁴If you lend {money or property} only to those who will give it back to you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that. Even sinners lend to other sinners who will give everything back to them. ³⁵Instead, love your enemies! Do good things for them! Lend to them, and do not expect them to pay anything back! Then God will give you a great reward. And you will be children of God the Most High, since God is kind even to people who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶So you should act mercifully toward other people, just as God, your Father, acts mercifully toward people.

³⁷Do not harshly criticize {other people}. Then God will not harshly criticize you. Do not condemn {other people}. Then God will not condemn you. Forgive {others for the wrong things they have done to you}. Then God will forgive you. ³⁸Give {to others}. Then God will give to you. It will be as if he is trying to give you as much grain as possible in a container you have. He will press the grain down. He will shake it together. He will keep filling the container until it overflows. So when you give to others, it should be as if you are using a big scoop, because God will use the same size scoop to give to you."

³⁹He also gave his disciples this example: "A blind person should not try to lead another blind person {down the road}. If he did, they both would fall into the ditch {on the side of the road}! ⁴⁰A disciple is not greater than his teacher. But once the teacher has finished training him, he will become like his teacher.

⁴¹{None of you should be concerned about the small faults of another person. You should be concerned about your own serious faults.} Otherwise, that would be like noticing a speck in the eye of that person while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴²You should not tell another believer, 'Friend, let me help you correct your faults,' when you have not dealt with your own faults yet. If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first {stop committing your own sins. That will be like} removing a large plank from your own eye. Then, as a result, you will have the spiritual insight you need to help others get rid of the {smaller faults that are like} little specks in their eyes.

⁴³Everyone knows that healthy trees do not produce bad fruit and unhealthy trees do not produce good fruit.

⁴⁴You can tell what a person is like inside by the things that they do. {Then you know what to expect from them. You would not look for kindness or good advice from someone who does bad things.} That would be like looking for figs on a thornbush or looking for grapes on a bramble vine. ⁴⁵Good people do good things because they think good things. Evil people do evil things because they think evil things. This is because people speak and act based on what they are thinking about."

⁴⁶{Jesus said to the people,} "Why do you call me 'Lord' when you do not obey what I tell you to do? ⁴⁷Let me tell you what people are like who come to me, hear my teachings, and obey them. ⁴⁸Such people are like a person who dug deep into the ground to prepare to build his house. He made sure to build the foundation {for the house} on solid rock. Then there was a flood. A torrent of water was beating against that house. But it could not destroy it, because the person had built the house on a solid foundation. ⁴⁹But some people who hear my teachings do not obey them. They are like a person who built a house on top of the ground without digging a foundation first. When the floodwaters came, it collapsed immediately. The waters destroyed that house completely."

Chapter 7

¹After Jesus finished saying all these things to the people who were listening, he went to the town of Capernaum.

²In that town there was a centurion in the Roman army who had a slave who was dear to him. This slave was so sick that he was about to die. ³When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly asked him {to help the centurion's slave}. They said, "He deserves to have you do this for him, ⁵because he loves our people and he built our synagogue for us." ⁶So Jesus went with them {to the officer's house}. When he was almost there, the officer sent some friends to give this message to Jesus: "Lord, do not go to the trouble {of coming here}, since I am not worthy to have you come into my house. ⁷That is why I did not feel that I was worthy to come to you in person. I knew that you could heal my dear slave just by speaking {a command}. ⁸{I know that you can do this} because I myself am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors. I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another one, 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." ⁹When Jesus heard what the officer had said, he was amazed at him. Then he turned to the crowd that was with him and said, "Let me tell you, I have not met any Israelite who trusts me as much as this Gentile does!" ¹⁰When the friends who had come from the centurion returned to his house, they found that the slave was in good health again.

¹¹Soon after that Jesus traveled to the town of Nain. His disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As Jesus came near to the town gate, he saw a large crowd coming out of the town. A man had just died, and they were carrying him out to bury him. His mother was in the crowd. She was a widow, and he had been her only son. {He had taken care of her while he was alive.} ¹³When Jesus saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not cry!" ¹⁴Then he came close {to them} and touched the stretcher {on which the body was lying}. The men carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵Then the man who had died sat up and began to talk! And Jesus led him back to his mother. ¹⁶Everyone there was awestruck. They praised God and said {to each other}, "A great prophet has come among us!" and "God has come to care for his people!" ¹⁷Then this news about {what} Jesus {had done} spread throughout the region of Judea and all the other areas nearby.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹The disciples of John the Baptizer told him about all these things. So John called for two of his disciples and told them to go to the Lord and ask him: "Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we be expecting someone else?" ²⁰When those two men came to Jesus, they told him, "John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one whom God promised would come? Or should we wait for someone else?'" ²¹At that same time Jesus was healing many people from sicknesses and serious diseases, and he was delivering them from evil spirits. He also gave many blind people the ability to see again. ²²So he answered those two men, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. People who were blind are now seeing. People who were lame are now walking. People who had skin diseases no longer have them. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead have come back to life. I am proclaiming good news to poor people." ²³{And also tell him,} "God will bless anyone who {sees what I do and hears what I teach and} continues to believe in me."

²⁴When the men whom John had sent left, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said, "What did you go into the wilderness to see? A thin stalk of a plant shaken by the wind? ²⁵But what did you go out to see? A man wearing fancy clothing? Listen, those who wear splendid clothes and who have the best of everything live in kings' palaces. ²⁶Then what did you go out there to see? A prophet? Yes{, that is who John is!} But I tell you that John is more significant than an ordinary prophet. ²⁷He is the one about whom the prophet wrote long ago: 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare people for your coming.'

²⁸I tell you that of all the people who have ever lived, there is no one greater than John. Yet the most insignificant people whose lives God is ruling are greater than John."

²⁹When all the people whom John had baptized heard what Jesus said—including the tax collectors—they agreed that God had done the right thing {by sending John}. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the experts in the Jewish law, whom John had not baptized, rejected God's will for them.

³¹{Then Jesus also said, "I will tell you} what you people living in this time period are like. ³²You are like children playing games in an open area. They call out to each other, saying, 'We played happy music for you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did not cry!' ³³Similarly, when John came to you and did not eat ordinary food or drink wine, you {rejected him and} said, 'A demon is controlling him!' ³⁴But when the Son of Man came to you and he ate {ordinary food} and drank {wine as others do}, then you {rejected him and} said, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with tax collectors and other sinners!' ³⁵But those who are wise themselves recognize that what John and I do is also wise."

³⁶One day a certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went to the man's house and reclined at a table to eat. ³⁷There was also a woman in that city who had a bad reputation. When she heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, {she went there,} bringing a stone jar that contained perfume. ³⁸{As Jesus was reclining to eat, the woman stood behind him at his feet.} She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus' feet. She continually wiped his feet with her hair. She kept kissing them and anointing them with the perfume.

³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw {what the woman was doing}, he thought, "If this man really were a prophet, he would have known who this woman is who is touching him. He would have known what kind of person she is, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰In response, Jesus said to him, "Simon, there is something I want to tell you." He replied, "Teacher, what is it?" ⁴¹{Jesus told him this story:} "Two people owed money to a man who had a business lending money. One of these people owed him 500 silver coins. The other one owed him 50 silver coins. ⁴²Neither of them was able to pay back what he owed, so the man very kindly said that they both did not have to pay back anything. So, which of those two men will love that man more?" ⁴³Simon replied, "I assume that the one who had owed him the larger amount will love him more." Jesus said to him, "You are correct." ⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Think about what this woman has done! When I entered your house{, you did not do what hosts usually do to welcome their guests.} You did not give me any water to wash my feet. But this woman has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair! ⁴⁵You did not greet me with a kiss. But from the moment I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet! ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with fragrant perfume. ⁴⁷So I tell you that God has forgiven her many sins, and that is why she loves me very much. But a person who thinks that God has only had to forgive him for a few sins will love me only a little bit." ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to the woman, "I have forgiven your sins." ⁴⁹Then those who were eating with him said among themselves, "Who is this man who says that he can even forgive sins?" ⁵⁰But Jesus said to the woman, "Because you have believed in me, God has saved you. May God give you peace as you go!"

Chapter 8

¹After that, Jesus and his twelve disciples traveled around through various cities and villages. As they went, Jesus preached to people, telling them the good news that they could have God rule their lives. ²{Also traveling with them were} several women whom he had delivered from evil spirits and healed from sicknesses. These included Mary from the village of Magdala. Jesus had forced seven evil spirits to leave her. ³{Another of these women was} Joanna. She was the wife of Chuza, who was a manager for King Herod. {These women also included} Susanna and many others. They were using their own money to support Jesus and his disciples.

⁴One day a very large crowd was gathering. People were traveling from many different towns to see Jesus. He told them this story: ⁵"A farmer went out to plant some grain seeds. As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell onto the hard pathway. People stepped on those seeds, and birds ate them all up. ⁶Some of the seeds fell on {shallow soil above a layer of} rock. As soon as those seeds grew, the plants dried up because their roots could not get past the rock to reach to the moisture. ⁷Some of the seeds fell on ground where thorn plants had left their own seeds. The new thorn plants grew up together with the young grain plants. The {stronger} thorns crowded out the grain plants, so that the grain did not grow well. ⁸But some of the grain seeds fell on fertile soil. They grew so well that they produced a crop that had a hundred times as many seeds." After saying these things, Jesus called out to the crowd, "You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

⁹Then Jesus' disciples asked him, "What does that story mean?" ¹⁰And he said, "God has given you the privilege of knowing hidden things about how God will rule as king. But {I speak} to everyone else only in parables, so that, 'Although they see, they may not perceive, and although they hear, they may not understand.'

¹¹Now, this is what the story means: The seeds represent what God wants people to understand. ¹²The seeds that fell on the pathway {show what happens when} people understand the message from God only superficially. This makes it easy for the devil to come and take that message away from their minds. As a result, they do not believe it, and so God does not save them. ¹³The seeds that fell on the rocky ground {show what happens when} people hear the message from God and receive it joyfully, but they do not commit themselves seriously. They only believe for a short time. As soon as difficult things happen to them, they stop trusting in God. ¹⁴The seeds that fell among the thorny plants {show what happens to some other} people who hear the message from God. As they go on in life, they allow the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life to occupy all their attention. As a result, they do not become spiritually mature. ¹⁵But the seeds that fell on the fertile ground {show what happens when} people hear the message about God and accept it with great sincerity. They make a firm commitment, and because they keep this commitment, they become spiritually mature.

¹⁶Think about this. When people light a lamp, they do not cover it with a basket. They do not put it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a lampstand. That way everyone who enters the room can see by its light. ¹⁷This illustrates that someday everyone will be able to see everything that is now hidden. And someday everyone will see in the open everything that is now secret. ¹⁸So make sure that you are listening carefully {to what I tell you}, because if someone believes God's truth, God will enable him to understand even more. But if someone does not believe God's truth, God will cause him not to understand even {the little} he thinks he has understood."

¹⁹One day Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they could not get near him because there was {such} a {large} crowd {around him in the house where he was}. ²⁰Then people told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹But he replied to them, "Those who hear the message from God and obey it are as dear to me as my mother and my brothers."

²²On another day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. He said to them, "I would like us to go across to the other side of the lake." So they started to sail across the lake. ²³But as they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. Then a powerful windstorm began on the lake. Soon the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. ²⁴So Jesus' disciples came over to wake him up. They said to him, "Master! Master! We are all going to die!" He woke up and scolded the wind and the violent waves. The wind stopped blowing, the waves stopped hitting the boat, and everything became calm. ²⁵Then he said to them, "You acted as if you had no faith!" The disciples were alarmed and amazed {because of what had just happened}. They kept asking each other, "Who could Jesus be? He is able to command even the winds and the waves, and they obey him."

²⁶Jesus and his disciples continued sailing and came to the region where the Gerasene people lived. It was on the opposite side of the lake from the district of Galilee. ²⁷When Jesus came out of the boat onto the land, a certain man from the town in that area met him. This man had demons in him. For a long time this man had not worn clothes and had not lived in a house. Instead, he lived in the burial caves.

²⁸When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and lay facedown before him. He shouted, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!" ²⁹{The man said this because} Jesus had just commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. In the past, people had bound him with chains and shackles and kept a close watch on him. Even so, many times the evil spirit would suddenly seize him by force. Then the man would break free, and the demon would make him go out into deserted places. ³⁰Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" The demon replied, "{My name is} Thousands." He said that because many demons had entered the man. ³¹The demons kept begging Jesus not to command them to go into the deep pit where God punishes demons. ³²There was a large herd of pigs grazing on the hillside nearby. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, and he allowed them. ³³So the demons left the man and entered the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴When those who were taking care of the pigs saw what happened, they ran away! They reported what they had seen to all the people who lived around them. ³⁵Then the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to where Jesus was, they saw that the man from whom the demons had gone out was sitting at the feet of Jesus. They saw that he had clothes on and his mind was normal again. {They realized how powerful Jesus must be,} and they became afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen what had happened told the people who had just arrived how Jesus had rescued the man who had been controlled by demons. ³⁷Then many people from that place where the Gerasenes lived asked Jesus to leave their area, because they were very afraid. So Jesus and his disciples got into the boat to go back across the lake. ³⁸Before they left, the man from whom the demons had gone out begged Jesus, saying, "Please, let me go with you!" But instead, Jesus sent him away by saying to him, ³⁹"No, go back to your home and tell {everyone} how much God has done for you!" So the man went away and told people throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

⁴⁰And when Jesus and his disciples got back across the lake to Capernaum, a crowd of people welcomed them. They had all been waiting for him there. ⁴¹Just then a man named Jairus, who was one of the leaders of the synagogue there, came near to Jesus, and he lay facedown before him. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house. ⁴²He did this because he had an only daughter, who was about 12 years old, and she was dying. {He wanted Jesus to heal her.}

Now as Jesus went {with him}, many people were crowding around him. ⁴³Now in the crowd there was a woman who had been suffering for 12 years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She had spent all her money^[1] to pay doctors to help her, but none of them was able to heal her. ⁴⁴She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his robe. At once her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵Jesus said, "Who touched me?" Everyone {around Jesus} said that they had not touched him. Peter said, "Master, there are many people crowding around you and pressing up against you. {So any one of them might have touched you!}" ⁴⁶But Jesus said, "I know that someone {deliberately} touched me, because power has gone out from me {to heal that person}." ⁴⁷Then the woman realized that she could not hide. She came trembling to Jesus and {respectfully} lay facedown on the ground before him. As the other people were listening, she explained why she had touched Jesus and how she gotten better immediately. ⁴⁸And Jesus said to her, "My dear woman, because you believed {that I could heal you}, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God's peace be with you."

⁴⁹While Jesus was still speaking {to the woman}, a man from Jairus' house came and said to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. So do not take up any more of the teacher's time." ⁵⁰But when Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid. Just believe {in me}, and she will live again." ⁵¹When he arrived outside the house, Jesus did not allow anyone to go in the house with him except for Peter, John, and James, and the girl's father and mother. ⁵²And all the people there were loudly demonstrating how sad they were that the girl had died. But Jesus said to them, "Stop crying! She is not dead! She is only sleeping!" ⁵³And the people laughed at him because they knew that the girl was dead. ⁵⁴But Jesus took hold of her hand and called {to her}, saying, "Child, get up!" ⁵⁵And immediately she came back to life and she got up. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were amazed, but Jesus told them not to tell anyone else {yet} what had happened.

8:43 ^[1]

Chapter 9

¹Then Jesus called together his twelve Representatives and gave them the right and power to drive out all kinds of demons and to heal {people's} diseases. ²He sent them out to announce {the good news about} how God would rule as king. He told them to heal people who were sick. ³{Before they left,} he said to them, "Do not take anything with you for your journey. Do not take a walking stick or a traveler's bag or food or money. Do not bring an extra tunic. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay in that house until you leave that area. ⁵If the people in any town do not welcome you, you should not stay there. Instead, leave that town and, as you go, shake its dust off your feet. That

will be a warning to them {for rejecting you}.” ⁶Then Jesus’ disciples left and traveled through many villages. Everywhere they went, they talked to people about the good news from God, and they healed sick people.

⁷Herod, the ruler over the district of Galilee, heard about everything that was happening, and he was perplexed. Some people were saying that John the Baptizer had become alive again. ⁸Other people were saying that the prophet Elijah had appeared again. Still others were saying that one of the other prophets from long ago had become alive again. ⁹But Herod said, “It cannot be John, because I had his head cut off. So who is this man? I keep hearing such amazing things about him!” And he kept looking for a way to see Jesus.

¹⁰When the Representatives returned from their trip, they told Jesus everything that they had done. Then he took them aside to go by themselves with him to the town of Bethsaida. ¹¹But when the crowds learned where Jesus had gone, they followed him there. He welcomed them and spoke to them about how God was going to rule as king. He also healed those who were sick.

¹²Now it was getting late in the day, so the twelve disciples came to him and said, “Please send this large crowd of people away so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms to get some food and find places to stay, since we are out here in this isolated place.” ¹³But he said to them, “You must give them something to eat!” They replied, “All we have are five small loaves of bread and two small fish. We could never go buy enough food for all these people!” ¹⁴{They said this} because there were about 5000 men there. Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Have the people sit down in groups. Put about 50 people in each group.” ¹⁵So the disciples did that, and the people all sat down. ¹⁶Then Jesus took the five loaves of bread and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and praised God for them. Then he divided the bread and fish into pieces and gave them to the disciples for them to distribute to the people. ¹⁷They all ate, and everyone had enough to eat. Then the disciples collected the leftover pieces of food, which filled 12 baskets!

¹⁸One day while Jesus was praying in private, with his disciples nearby, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” ¹⁹They replied, “{Some people say that you are} John the Baptizer, but others say that you are the prophet Elijah, and still others say that you are one of the other prophets from long ago who has come back to life again.” ²⁰He asked them, “What about you? Who do you say that I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Messiah, who has come from God.” ²¹Then Jesus warned them strongly not to tell that to anyone yet. ²²Then he said, “I, the Son of Man, must suffer many things: The elders, chief priests, and teachers of the Jewish laws will reject me and kill me. Then, on the third day after that, I will come back to life again.”

²³Then he said to them all, “If any one of you wants to be my disciple, you must not do only what you want to do. Rather, every day you must be willing to suffer, even to the point of giving up your life. That is how to be my disciple. ²⁴{You must do that} because those who try to save their own lives will lose them eternally, but those who give up their lives in order to become my disciples will save their lives eternally. ²⁵After all, how does it benefit you if you gain everything in this world but you then end up losing, or even destroying, your own self? ²⁶Suppose someone is afraid to say that they believe in me and that they follow my teaching. Then, I, the Son of Man, will say that such a person does not belong to me. This will happen when I come back in my glory and in the glory of God the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But you can be sure of this: Some of you who are standing here now will not die until you see God ruling as king!”

²⁸About eight days after Jesus said those things, he took Peter, John, and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray {there}. ²⁹While he was praying, the appearance of his face became very different, and his clothes began to shine brightly. ³⁰All at once, two {prophets from long ago} were there talking with Jesus. They were Moses and Elijah. ³¹These men appeared surrounded in glory. They spoke with Jesus about how he was going to die. This was something that was going to happen soon in Jerusalem. ³²Peter and the other disciples who were with him were very sleepy. But when they woke up fully, they saw how brightly Jesus was shining. They also saw Moses and Elijah standing with him. ³³As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here! We should make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!” But he really did not realize what he was saying. ³⁴As he was saying these things, a cloud formed and covered them. The

disciples were afraid as the cloud surrounded them. ³⁵God's voice spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶When the voice had finished speaking, {the three disciples saw that} only Jesus was there. They kept all this to themselves. For a long time they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

³⁷The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd of people met Jesus. ³⁸Suddenly a man from the crowd called out, "Teacher, I plead with you, do something to help my son! He is my only child.

³⁹Here is what is happening. An evil spirit suddenly seizes him and causes him to scream. It shakes him violently and causes him to foam at the mouth. This spirit hardly ever leaves my child and, when it does, it injures him severely. ⁴⁰I pleaded with your disciples to command the evil spirit to come out of him, but they were not able to do it!" ⁴¹In response, Jesus said, "This generation of people does not believe, and so its thinking is corrupt! How much longer must I be with you before you believe?" {Then he said to the boy's father,} "Bring your son here to me!"

⁴²While they were bringing the boy to him, the demon threw the boy down to the ground and shook him severely. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then he returned him to his father. ⁴³Then all the people there were completely amazed at the great power God had shown.

While they were all still marveling at all the miracles Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you, because someone will soon hand me, the Son of Man, over to my enemies." ⁴⁵But the disciples did not understand what he meant by this. God prevented them from understanding it so that they would not know yet what he meant, and they were afraid to ask him about what he had said.

⁴⁶Sometime later, the disciples began to argue among themselves about which one of them would be the most important. ⁴⁷But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he brought a young child over and had the child stand beside him. ⁴⁸He said to them, "If someone welcomes a little child like this one because of me, it is the same as welcoming me. And if someone welcomes me, it is the same as welcoming God, who sent me. Remember that those among you who seem to be the least important are the ones whom God considers to be most important."

⁴⁹John replied to Jesus, "Master, we saw a man who was using your name to command demons to come out of people. But we told him to stop doing that, because he was not working closely with you the way we are." ⁵⁰But Jesus told John, "Do not stop him from doing that! If someone is not doing something that is harmful to you, then what he is doing is helpful to you!"

⁵¹When it was getting close to the time when God would take him back up to heaven, Jesus firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²He sent some messengers ahead of him. They traveled on and went into a village in the region of Samaria to try to arrange for him to stay there. ⁵³But the Samaritans would not let Jesus stay in their village, because he was on his way to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴Two of his disciples, James and John, {got angry when they} saw {that the Samaritans were not going to welcome them}. So they asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and destroy these people?" ⁵⁵But Jesus turned {to them} and sternly told them they were wrong to say that. ⁵⁶So they went to a different village.

⁵⁷As Jesus and the disciples were walking along the road, someone said to him, "I will go with you wherever you go!" ⁵⁸Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!" ⁵⁹Jesus said to a different person, "Come with me!" But that person said, "Lord, let me first go home and bury my father." ⁶⁰But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. I want you to go and tell people everywhere that they can have God rule their lives." ⁶¹Someone else said, "Lord, I will come with you and be your disciple, but first let me go home to say goodbye to my family." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "Anyone who is like a farmer who tries to plow his field while looking behind him is not able to serve God as his ruler."

Chapter 10

¹After that, Jesus appointed 72 other disciples {to go and prepare people to hear him}. He sent them out in pairs to go ahead of him to every town and village where he was intending to go himself. ²He said to them, "Many people

are ready to believe in me, but there are only a few of you whom I can send out to help them. So pray to God{, who wants all of those people to believe,} and plead with him for more disciples who can go and help them. ³Go now, but remember that I am sending you out to tell my message to people who will be hostile to you. ⁴Do not bring along any money. Do not bring {a lot of things with you in} a pack. Do not bring {extra shoes}. Do not {stop and} talk with people along the way. ⁵Whenever you enter a house, first say to the people who live there, 'May God bless everyone in this house with peace!' ⁶If the people who live there desire God's peace, then they will experience the peace you are offering them. But if they do not desire God's peace, then you will experience that peace yourselves. ⁷Stay in that same house until you leave that village. Do not move around from one house to another. Eat and drink whatever they provide for you, because a worker deserves to receive payment for his work. ⁸If you enter any town and the people there welcome you, eat whatever food they provide for you. ⁹Heal the people in that city who are sick. Tell everyone, 'You are seeing close up what it will be like when God rules everywhere as king.' ¹⁰But if you enter any town and the people there do not welcome you, go into its main streets and say, ¹¹{As a warning} against you, we will wipe off even the dust that sticks to our feet {as we are leaving your town}. But you must realize that you have seen close up what it will be like when God rules everywhere as king! ¹²I want you to know that at the time when God judges everyone, God will punish the people of that town even more severely than the wicked people who lived long ago in the city of Sodom!

¹³How terrible it will be for you people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida! I say this because I did great miracles while I was in your cities. If I had performed those same miracles in {the ancient cities of} Tyre and Sidon, the {wicked} people who lived there would have been very sorry for their sins. They would have shown this by sitting on the ground wearing coarse clothing and putting ashes on their heads. ¹⁴So when God judges everyone, he will punish you more severely than the wicked people who lived in Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁵I also have something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. You may think that God is going to give you great rewards. No, God is not going to reward you at all!"

¹⁶{Jesus also said to the disciples,} "Whoever listens to your message is{, in effect,} listening to me. Whoever rejects your message is{, in effect,} rejecting me. And whoever rejects me is{, in effect,} rejecting God who sent me."

¹⁷The 72 people whom Jesus appointed {went and did what he told them to do.} When they returned, they were very joyful. They said, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when, by your authority, we commanded them to leave people!" ¹⁸Jesus told them, "{While you were away doing that,} I saw Satan lose a position of advantage as suddenly and quickly as lightning comes down! ¹⁹Listen! I have given you the power to defeat evil spirits. I have even given you enough power to defeat our enemy, Satan. Nothing will hurt you at all. ²⁰But do not {only} rejoice that the evil spirits must obey you. You should rejoice {even more} that God has written your names in heaven{, because that means you will be with God forever}."

²¹Right then, the Holy Spirit gave Jesus great joy. He said, "God my Father, you are Lord over everything in heaven and on earth. I praise you that you have prevented people who think they are smart from understanding things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth as readily as little children do. Yes, Father, you have done that because it pleased you to do so. ²²God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. And only I, his Son, really know my Father. But I do choose to show some people who he is."

²³Then Jesus said, just to his disciples, "God has given you a great gift by letting you see the things that I am doing!

²⁴I want you to know that many prophets and kings would have liked to see the things that you are seeing me do. But they did not get to see them{, because they lived long ago}. They would have liked to hear the things that you have been hearing me say. But they did not get to hear them{, because they lived long ago}."

²⁵A man who taught Jewish laws was there. He wanted to test Jesus {by asking him a difficult question}. So he stood up and asked, "Teacher, what do I have to do in order to live with God forever?" ²⁶Jesus said to him, "You have read what Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him. What do those laws say?" ²⁷The man replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind. And love your

neighbor as much as you love yourself.” ²⁸Jesus told him, “You have answered correctly. If you do all that, you will live {with God forever}.”

²⁹But the man wanted to show that God would approve of him. So he said to Jesus, “Which people are my neighbors {whom I should love}?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “One day, a Jewish man was traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Some bandits attacked him. They took away most of the man’s clothes and everything else that he had. They beat him until he was almost dead. Then they left him there. ³¹It happened that a {Jewish} priest was going along that road. When he saw that man, {instead of helping him,} he passed by on the other side of the road. ³²Similarly, a Levite {who worked in God’s temple} also came to that place and saw the man. But he too passed by on the other side of the road. ³³Then a man from the region of Samaria came along that road to where the man was lying. When he saw that man, he pitied him. ³⁴He went over to him and put some olive oil and wine on his wounds {to help heal them}. He wrapped strips of cloth around the wounds. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next morning he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of this man. If you need to spend more than this amount to care for him, I will pay you back when I return.’” ³⁶{Then Jesus asked,} “Three people found the man whom the bandits had attacked. Which one of them would you say was a true neighbor to that man?” ³⁷The teacher of the law replied, “The one who acted mercifully toward him.” Jesus said to him, “{That is correct.} So you should go and act like that toward anyone who needs your help.”

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples continued to travel, they entered a certain village. There a woman whose name was Martha invited them to come to her house. ³⁹Her sister, whose name was Mary, sat near Jesus’ feet and listened to what he was teaching. ⁴⁰But Martha was worrying about preparing the meal for all of them. She went to Jesus and said, “Lord, my sister has left me to prepare everything by myself. You must know that is not fair. Please tell her to help me!” ⁴¹But Jesus replied to her, “Martha, Martha, you are very worried about many things. ⁴²But the one thing that is really important {is to listen to what I am teaching}. Because Mary has chosen the best thing to do, I will not tell her to do something else.”

Chapter 11

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us how to pray. John the Baptist did that for his own disciples, and we would like you to do that for us.” ²He said to them, “When you pray, say {things like this}: ‘Father, may all people honor your name as holy. May you soon rule all people everywhere. ³Please give us the food we need each day. ⁴Please forgive us for the wrong things that we have done. We ourselves will forgive people for the wrong things they have done to us. Help us to not sin when something tempts us.’”

⁵Then he said to them, “Suppose that one of you goes to the house of a friend at midnight. You {stand outside and} call to him, ‘My friend, please lend me three loaves of bread! ⁶Another friend of mine who is traveling has just arrived at my house. But I do not have any food ready to serve him!’ ⁷And suppose that he responds from inside the house, ‘Do not bother me! I have already locked the door, and my whole family is in bed. It would be too hard for me to get up and give you something!’ ⁸I tell you, he may not want to get up and give his friend any food just because he is his friend. But if he keeps on asking, the man inside will certainly get up and give him everything he needs. ⁹So I tell you: Keep asking God for the things you need, and he will give them to you. Keep seeking those things from God, and you will receive them. Ask God to make things possible for you, and he will act on your behalf. ¹⁰You should do this because anyone who keeps asking God for the things he needs will receive them. Anyone who seeks those things from God will receive them. If anyone asks God to make things possible for him, God will act on his behalf. ¹¹Suppose one of you fathers had a son who asked you for a fish to eat. You certainly would not give him a poisonous snake instead! ¹²Suppose he asked you for an egg. You certainly would not give him a scorpion instead! ¹³Even though you people are sinful, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. So it is even more certain that your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

¹⁴One day Jesus was forcing out a demon who was keeping a man from speaking. After Jesus forced the demon out, the man began to talk. This amazed the crowd of people that was there. ¹⁵But some of them said, "It is Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to force out demons!" ¹⁶Other people there questioned his authority. They demanded that he perform a miracle to prove that God had sent him. ¹⁷But he knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. If the people in one household oppose each other, they will destroy their family. ¹⁸Similarly, if Satan and his demons were fighting against each other, his rule over them would certainly not last! I say this because you are saying that I force out demons by the power of the ruler of demons! ¹⁹If it is true that Beelzebul is enabling me to force out demons, it must also be true that he is enabling your disciples to force out demons. {But you know that is not true.} So your own disciples prove that you are wrong. ²⁰I must actually be forcing out demons by the power of God. This means that God has begun to rule over you."

²¹{Jesus continued,} "When a strong man who has many weapons guards his own house, no one can steal the things inside. ²²But when someone else who is stronger attacks that man and subdues him, he takes away the weapons that the man was depending on. Then he can steal anything he wants from that man's house. ²³Anyone who is not supporting me is opposing me. Anyone who is not bringing people to me is sending them away from me."

²⁴{Then Jesus said,} "An evil spirit might leave someone and wander around in desolate areas looking for someone else to live in. If it does not find anyone there, it may say, 'I am going to go back to the person I used to live in!' ²⁵So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that someone has swept clean and put in order, but which has no one living in it. ²⁶Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living in him. That person's condition was bad before, and it becomes even worse."

²⁷When Jesus said that, a woman in the crowd {who was listening} called out to him loudly, "God is pleased with the woman who gave birth to you and who nursed you!" ²⁸Then he replied, "God is even more pleased with those who hear his message and obey it!"

²⁹More and more people were coming to join the crowd around Jesus. He said, "The people living at this time are evil people. They want me to do a miracle {to prove that I have come from God}. But the only proof they will see is a miracle like the one that happened to Jonah. ³⁰Long ago God did a miracle for Jonah to show the people living in the city of Nineveh that he had sent him. In the same way, God will do a similar miracle for me, the Son of Man, to show the people living now that he has sent me. ³¹Long ago the Queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to hear the wise things that Solomon said. Now someone greater than Solomon is right here with you. {But you have not really listened to what I am saying.} Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, she will stand up and condemn the people who are living now. ³²The people who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh turned from their sinful ways when Jonah preached to them. And now I, who am greater than Jonah, have come and preached to you. {But you have not turned from your sinful ways.} Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, the people who lived in Nineveh will stand up and condemn the people who are living now."

³³People who light a lamp do not hide it or put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that those who enter the room can see the light. ³⁴Your eye lets light into your body. If your eye is working right, then your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is not working right, then your body will not get any light.

³⁵Therefore, be careful not to think that your eye is working right and letting in light if it is actually not working right and not letting in any light. ³⁶So if light is getting into every part of your body, so that no part of it is in the dark, then all of your body will be full of light. Bright light will shine all over you inside, just as the bright light of a lamp shines all over you outside."

³⁷After Jesus finished saying those things, a Pharisee invited him to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table to eat. ³⁸The Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not ritually wash his hands first before eating. ³⁹Jesus said to him, "You Pharisees wash the outside of cups and dishes before you eat, but within yourselves you are very greedy and wicked. ⁴⁰You foolish people! Surely you know that

God not only made the outside, but also made the inside! ⁴¹{Instead of worrying about dishes being ritually clean, be merciful and} give whatever is inside the dishes to people in need. Then both the inside and outside of you will be acceptable to God.

⁴²But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! You carefully give to God a tenth of all you have, including even the herbs that you grow in your gardens. But then you do not show God's love or fairness toward others. You should make sure that you do that, in addition to giving to God. ⁴³How terrible it will be for you Pharisees, because you like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues, and you like people to greet you {with special honor} in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴How terrible it will be for you, because you are like unmarked graves that people walk over without realizing it and so become ceremonially unclean."

⁴⁵One of the teachers of the Jewish laws who were there complained to Jesus, "Teacher, when you say things like that, you are criticizing us too!" ⁴⁶But Jesus responded, "How terrible it will also be for you who are teachers of the Jewish laws! I say this because you tell people to follow so many rules, yet you will not do even the smallest thing to help them. ⁴⁷How terrible it will be for you, because you construct buildings to mark the graves of the prophets, but your ancestors are the ones who killed them! ⁴⁸So when you build these buildings, you are declaring that you approve of what your ancestors did when they killed the prophets. ⁴⁹So God, who is very wise, also said, 'I will send prophets and messengers to guide my people. But they will cause them to suffer greatly. They will even kill some of them.' ⁵⁰As a result, the people living at this time will be punished for the murder of all the prophets whom people have killed since the world was created. ⁵¹They will be punished for every murder from that of {Adam's son} Abel{, whose brother Cain killed him,} right through to the murder of {the prophet} Zechariah, whom the king's agents killed {in the temple} between the altar and the holy place. ⁵²How terrible it will be for you teachers of the Jewish laws. You are keeping people from knowing about God! You do not know God yourselves, and you make things difficult for other people who want to know God better."

⁵³{After Jesus finished saying those things,} he left the Pharisee's house. Then the teachers of the Jewish laws and the Pharisees began to act in a very hostile way toward him. They questioned him intensely about many things.

⁵⁴They kept listening for him to say something wrong so that they could accuse him of false teaching.

Chapter 12

¹Meanwhile, many thousands of people gathered {around Jesus}. There were so many that they were stepping on each other. The first thing he said to his disciples was, "Be careful that you do not become like the Pharisees, who act religious in public but do evil things in secret. ²It is useless for people to try to keep their sins a secret. Someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. ³Someday people will hear publicly everything you have said privately. Someday someone will shout for everyone to hear what you have whispered in your room.

⁴My friends, listen carefully! Do not be afraid of people. They can kill you, but they cannot do anything more to you after that! ⁵I will tell you whom you should truly be afraid of. You should be afraid of God. Not only does he have the right to cause people to die, he also has the right to throw them into hell afterward! Yes, I tell you, God is the one you should truly be afraid of! ⁶Think about the sparrows. {They have so little value that} you can buy five of them for only two small coins. And yet God never forgets any of them! ⁷God even knows how many hairs there are on your head. Do not be afraid, because you are more valuable {to God} than many sparrows.

⁸I tell you also that if people tell others that they are my disciples, then I, the Son of Man, will say to God's angels that those people are my disciples. ⁹But if they tell others that they are not my disciples, then I will say to God's angels that those people are not my disciples. ¹⁰I also tell you that if people say bad things about me, the Son of Man, God will forgive them for that. But if people say bad things about the Holy Spirit, God will not forgive them for that. ¹¹So when people bring you into the synagogues {to question you before the religious leaders there} and to other people who have power in the country, do not worry about how you will answer them or about what you should say, ¹²because the Holy Spirit will tell you at that very time what you should say."

¹³Then one of the people in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide our father's property with me!" ¹⁴But Jesus replied to him, "Man, no one made me a judge to settle arguments that people have about property!" ¹⁵Then he said to the whole crowd, "Be careful not to be greedy in any way! What matters about a person's life is not how many things he owns."

¹⁶Then Jesus told the crowd this story: "The lands of a certain rich man produced abundant crops. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'I do not know what to do, because I do not have any place {big enough} to store all my crops!' ¹⁸Then he thought to himself, 'I know what I will do! I will tear down my grain bins and build larger ones! Then I can store all my grain and other things in the big new bins. ¹⁹Then I will say to myself, 'Now I have stored up enough things to last many years. So I will take life easy. I will eat and drink and be happy'" ²⁰But God said to him, 'You foolish man! Tonight you will die! Then all the things you have saved up for yourself will belong to someone else, not to you!'"

²¹Then Jesus ended this illustration by saying, "That is what will happen to those who store up things just for themselves and do not value the things that God considers valuable."

²²Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Here is something you should learn from the story. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat to stay alive or enough clothes to wear to stay warm. ²³After all, your life is more important than the food you eat, and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. ²⁴Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not have rooms or buildings in which to store crops, but God provides food for them. And you are certainly much more valuable than birds. ²⁵None of you can add even a minute to his life by worrying about it! ²⁶So since you cannot even do that small thing, you certainly should not worry about anything else. ²⁷Think about the way that flowers grow. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their own clothes. But I tell you that King Solomon, who {lived long ago and} wore glorious clothes, never dressed as beautifully as a single flower. ²⁸God makes the plants beautiful, even though they grow for only a short time. Then people cut them down and throw them into the fire. {But you are very precious to God.} He will care for you even more than he cares for the plants. You should trust God more than you do. ²⁹As for you, do not wonder about what you will eat and drink, and do not keep worrying {about those things}. ³⁰While the people who do not know God all worry about such things, {you can be confident that} your Father in heaven knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, concentrate on what you can do for the kingdom of God. When you do, you can trust God to provide everything you need.

³²So you should not be afraid, my friends. Your Father in heaven wants you to be part of his kingdom {and receive all of its benefits}. ³³So sell the things you own and give the money to people who need food or clothing or a place to live. Get yourselves wallets that do not wear out. I mean store up treasure in heaven where it will always be safe. There no thief can steal anything and no moths will destroy your clothing. ³⁴After all, whatever it is that you treasure, that is what you will think about and spend your time on.

³⁵{Always} be {ready for doing God's work,} like people who have put on their work clothes and are keeping the lights on all night. ³⁶Be {ready for me to return,} like servants who are waiting for their master to return after being at a wedding feast. They are waiting to open the door for him as soon as he arrives and knocks at the door. ³⁷It will be very good for those servants if they are awake when their master returns. Let me tell you this: He will reward them by dressing like a servant, telling them to sit down, and serving them a meal. ³⁸Even if he comes home late in the evening or in the middle of the night, if he finds that his servants are awake and ready for him, he will be very pleased with them. ³⁹And I want you to consider this: If the owner of a house knew that a thief was coming, and at what time, he would stay awake and not let the thief break into his house. ⁴⁰So be ready, because I, the Son of Man, will come again at a time when you do not expect me."

⁴¹Peter asked, "Lord, are you giving this illustration only for us, your disciples? Or is it for the crowd too?" ⁴²Jesus replied, "I am saying it for everyone who is like a faithful and wise servant who is a manager in his master's house. His master puts him in charge of his other servants, to make sure they get their food at the proper time. ⁴³If his master comes home and sees that he is doing that work, he will reward that servant. ⁴⁴Let me tell you this: The master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. ⁴⁵But that servant who was put in charge might say to

himself, 'My master is going to be away for a long time.' Then he might start to beat the other servants. He might also start to eat and drink a lot and get drunk. ⁴⁶If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. Then his master will punish him severely and assign him a place with those who do not serve him faithfully. ⁴⁷The servant who knew what his master wanted but did not get ready and do it will be severely punished. ⁴⁸But every servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do, and then did something wrong, will only get a mild punishment. The master will expect much from all servants to whom he has given much. And the master will expect even more from servants whom he has entrusted with many responsibilities.

⁴⁹I came to stir up spiritual passions in people. I wish that they were already acting on them! ⁵⁰Soon I must go through terrible suffering. I will continue to be distressed until I finish my suffering. ⁵¹You should know that I did not come so that people would live together peacefully. No, you must understand that instead, people will take sides for and against me. ⁵²Be prepared, because this is what is going to happen. In a family of five people, some will believe in me and some will not. Three family members will join together against the other two. ⁵³Family members will conflict. A father will oppose his son, or a son will oppose his father. A mother will oppose her daughter, or a daughter will oppose her mother. A mother-in-law will oppose her daughter-in-law, or a daughter-in-law will oppose her mother-in-law."

⁵⁴He also said to the crowds, "When you see a dark cloud forming in the west, you immediately say 'It is going to rain!' and that is what happens. ⁵⁵When the wind blows from the south, you say, 'It is going to be a very hot day!' and you are right. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! By observing the clouds and the wind, you are able to discern what is happening regarding the weather. You should be able to discern what God is doing at this present time!

⁵⁷Each of you ought to decide for yourselves what is right! ⁵⁸Here is one thing you should do. You should try to settle things with someone who has accused you while you are still on the way to the court. If he forces you to go to the judge, the judge could decide that you are guilty and turn you over to the court officer. Then that officer will put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you that if you go to prison, you will never get out of there until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe."

Chapter 13

¹At that time, some people who were there in the crowd told Jesus about what had recently happened to some Galileans. Pilate, the Roman governor, had ordered soldiers to kill the Galileans while they were offering sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. ²Jesus replied to them, "Do you think that this happened to those people from Galilee because they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? ³I assure you, that was not the reason! Instead, God will similarly punish all of you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior. ⁴Or what about those 18 people who died when the tower in {the neighborhood of} Siloam fell on them? Do you think that this happened to them because they were worse sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem? ⁵I assure you, that was not the reason! But instead, you need to realize that God will similarly punish all of you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior!"

⁶Then Jesus told them this story: "A man planted a fig tree in his garden. {Each year} he came to pick the figs, but there were {always} none on it. ⁷Then he said to the gardener, 'Look at this tree! I have been looking for fruit on it every year for the past three years, but there have been no figs. Cut it down! It is just using up the nutrients in the soil for nothing!' ⁸But the gardener replied, 'Sir, leave it here for another year. I will dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it has figs on it next year, we can allow it to keep growing! But if it does not bear any fruit by then, you can cut it down.'"

¹⁰On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was teaching people in one of the synagogues. ¹¹There was a woman there whom an evil spirit had crippled for 18 years. She was always bent over. She could not stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over to him. He said to her, "Woman, I have healed you of this illness!" ¹³He put his hands on her. Immediately she stood up straight and began praising God! ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed her on the Jewish rest day. So he said to the people, "There are six days each week on which our laws permit people to work. If you need healing, those are the days to come to the synagogue for

someone to heal you. Do not come on our day of rest!" ¹⁵Then Jesus replied to him, "You and your fellow religious leaders are hypocrites! Each of you {also works on the day of rest sometimes! For example, you} untie your ox or donkey to lead it from the stall to a place where it can drink water. ¹⁶This woman is a Jew, descended from Abraham! But Satan has kept her crippled for 18 years, as though he had tied her up! Certainly you would agree that it is right that I free her from this disabling disease, even if I do it on a day of rest!" ¹⁷After he said that, his enemies were ashamed of themselves. But all the other people were happy about all the wonderful things he was doing.

¹⁸Then he said, "I want to explain what it is like when God rules as king. I will give you a picture to help you understand. ¹⁹It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It grew until it became big, like a tree. It was so big that birds built nests in its branches."

²⁰Then again he said, "I will tell you in another (way what) it is like when God rules. ²¹It is like a little bit of yeast that a woman mixed with about 25 kilograms of flour. That small amount of yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

²²Jesus continued traveling toward Jerusalem. He stopped in all the towns and villages along the way and taught the people. ²³Someone asked him, "Lord, will God only save a few people?" Jesus replied so that everyone there could hear, ²⁴"You need to try hard to enter, because it is very difficult. I tell you that many people will try to get in, but they will not be able to. ²⁵After the owner of the house gets up and locks the door, you will stand outside and you will knock on the door. And you will beg the owner and say to him, 'Lord, open the door for us!' But he will reply, 'No, I will not open it, because I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from!' ²⁶Then you will say, 'You must have forgotten that} we ate meals with you, and you taught us in the streets of our towns!' ²⁷But he will say, 'I tell you again, I do not know where you are from. You are all wicked people! Get away from here!'" ²⁸{Then Jesus continued by saying,} "You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob {in the distance}. All the prophets who lived long ago will also be there where God rules everything as king. But you will be outside, crying and grinding your teeth in sorrow! ²⁹But inside there will be people from every part of the world{, including many non-Jewish people}. They will all celebrate together where God rules everything as king. ³⁰Think about this: Some people who seem the least important now will be the most important then, and others who seem important now will be the least important then."

³¹That same day, some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Leave this area, because the ruler Herod Antipas wants to kill you!" ³²He replied to them, "Go and tell that cunning man{, who thinks he can hurt me but who really cannot,} this message from me: 'Listen! I am expelling demons and performing miracles now, and I will continue doing so for a short time. After that, I will finish my work.' ³³But I must also continue my trip to Jerusalem during the coming days, since {the Jewish leaders have always acted as if} it is not appropriate to kill a prophet in a place other than Jerusalem."

³⁴Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the prophets who lived long ago. Then you killed others whom God sent to you. You killed them by throwing stones at them. Many times I have wanted to gather you together to protect you, as a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that. ³⁵Now look! God will no longer protect you, people of Jerusalem. I will also tell you this: I will enter your city only once more. After that, you will not see me until the time when I return, and then you will say about me, 'May God bless this man who comes with God's authority!'"

Chapter 14

¹One day, which was a day of rest, Jesus went to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. {This leader had invited other Pharisees to the same meal.} They were all watching Jesus carefully {to try to find grounds to accuse him}. ²Right there in front of Jesus was a man who had a disease that caused his arms and legs to be very swollen. ³Jesus asked the experts in Jewish law and the Pharisees who were present, "Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the day of rest, or not?" ⁴They did not reply. So Jesus put his hands on the man and healed him.

Then he told him he could go. ⁵And he said to the others there, "If one of you had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the day of rest, you would pull him out immediately." ⁶Again, they were not able to answer him.

⁷Jesus noticed that the people who had been invited to the meal were choosing to sit in the places where important people usually sit. So he gave this advice to them. ⁸"When someone invites one of you to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place where important people sit. It may be that he has invited a person who is more important than you to the feast. ⁹When the host who invited both of you sees where you are each sitting, he will say to you, 'Let this person have your seat!' Then you will have to take the least important seat, and you will be ashamed. ¹⁰Instead, when someone invites you to a feast, go and sit in the least important seat. Then when the host who invited everyone comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, come sit in a better seat!' Then all the people who are eating with you will see that he is honoring you. ¹¹For God will humble those who exalt themselves, and he will exalt those who humble themselves."

¹²Jesus also said to the Pharisee who had invited him to the meal, "When you invite people to a midday or evening meal, do not only invite your friends, relatives, or rich neighbors, since they will later repay you by inviting you for a meal. ¹³Instead, when you give a feast, invite poor people, crippled people, lame people or blind people. ¹⁴If you do that, God will reward you, because they will not be able to repay you. You can be sure that God will pay you back at the time when he causes righteous people to become alive again."

¹⁵One of those who were eating with him heard him say that. He said to Jesus, "God has truly blessed everyone who will get to celebrate where God rules everything as king!" ¹⁶Jesus replied to him, "One time a man decided to prepare a large feast. He invited many people to come. ¹⁷When it was time for the feast, he sent his servant to tell those whom he had invited, 'Come now, because everything is ready!' ¹⁸But when the servant did that, all of the people whom he had invited began to say why they could not come. The first man to whom the servant went said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go there and see it. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!' ¹⁹Another person said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I must go to examine them. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!' ²⁰Another person said, 'I have just gotten married, so I cannot come.' ²¹So the servant returned to his master and reported what everyone had said. The owner of the house was angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city and find poor and crippled and blind and lame people, and bring them here into my house!' ²²{After} the servant {went out and did that, he came back and} said, 'Sir, I have done what you told me to do, but there is still room for more people.' ²³So his master said to him, 'Then go outside the city. Search for people along the highways. Search also along the narrow roads with hedges. Strongly urge the people in those places to come to my house. I want it to be full of people! ²⁴Moreover I tell you this, those men whom I invited first will not get to enjoy my feast{, because they refused to come}.'"}

²⁵A large crowd of people was traveling with Jesus. He turned toward the people and said to them, ²⁶"If anyone comes to me who loves his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters more than he loves me, he can not be my disciple. He must even love me more than he loves his own life! ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and does not obey me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸After all, if one of you wanted to build a tower, you would first sit down and determine how much it would cost. That way you would know whether you had enough money to finish it. ²⁹Otherwise, if you laid the foundation and were not able to finish the rest of the tower, everyone who saw it would make fun of you. ³⁰They would say, 'This man started to build a tower, but he was not able to finish it!' ³¹Or suppose a king had 10,000 soldiers in his army. And suppose another king who had 20,000 soldiers was coming to attack him. Before sending his army out to battle, that first king would certainly sit down with his advisors to determine whether he could defeat the other king's army. ³²Suppose he decided his army could not defeat the other army. Then he would send messengers to the other king while his army was still far away. He would tell the messengers to ask, 'What must I do to have peace with you?' ³³So, similarly, if any one of you does not first decide that you are willing to give up all that you have, you cannot be my disciple."

³⁴{Jesus also said, "You are like} salt{, which} is very useful. But if salt were to lose its saltiness, no one could ever make it taste salty again. ³⁵{If salt does not taste salty anymore,} it is no longer any good even for the soil or the manure heap. People just throw it away. You should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"}

Chapter 15

¹Now, many tax collectors and other people whom the religious leaders considered to be sinners kept coming to Jesus to listen to him teach. ²{When} the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws {saw this, they} began to grumble. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them." {They thought Jesus was defiling himself by doing that.} ³So Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose that one of you had 100 sheep and you lost one of them. Certainly you would leave the 99 other sheep in the wilderness and go search for the lost sheep until you had found it. ⁵When you found it, you would joyfully put it on your shoulders to carry it home. ⁶Then when you arrived home, you would call together your friends and neighbors and say to them: 'Be joyful with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!' ⁷You should know that, in a similar way, there is great joy among those in heaven when one sinner repents from his sins. That joy is greater than their joy over many people who are already right with God and do not need to repent.

⁸Or suppose that a woman had ten valuable silver coins but lost one of them. Certainly she would light a lamp and sweep the floor and search carefully until she found it. ⁹When she found it, she would call together her friends and neighbors and say to them, 'Be very happy with me, because I have found the coin that I lost!' ¹⁰I tell you that, in a similar way, there is much joy among the angels of God when one sinner repents from his sins."

¹¹Then Jesus continued and said, "There once was a man who had two sons. ¹²One day the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me now the share of your property that I would otherwise have received when you died.' So the father divided his property between his two sons. ¹³Only a few days later, the younger son gathered together all that he owned and traveled to a country far away. There in that country he spent all his money foolishly in wasteful, immoral living. ¹⁴After he had spent all his money, there was a severe famine throughout that country. Soon he did not have anything left to live on. ¹⁵So he went to a man who lived in that country and asked him to hire him. So the man sent him out to his fields to feed his pigs. ¹⁶{He became so hungry that} he wished he could eat the bean pods that the pigs ate, yet no one gave him anything. ¹⁷Finally he began to think clearly about how foolish he had been, and he said to himself: 'All of my father's hired servants have more than enough food to eat, but here I am dying because I do not have anything to eat!' ¹⁸So I will leave here and go back to my father. I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. ¹⁹I do not deserve to have you consider me your son any more. Please let me work for you as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰So he left there and started traveling back to his father's house. But while he was still a great distance from the house, his father saw him and felt deep compassion for him. He ran to his son and embraced him and kissed him on the cheek. ²¹His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. So I do not deserve to have you consider me your son any more.' ²²But his father said to his servants; 'Go quickly and bring my best robe and put it on my son. Also put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet! ²³And bring the calf that we have fattened for a special occasion and kill it, so that we can eat it and celebrate! ²⁴We need to celebrate because this son of mine was like a dead man, but he is now alive again! He was like a lost person, but we have found him again!' So they all began to celebrate.

²⁵{While all that was happening,} the father's older son was out working in the fields. {After he finished working,} he headed home. As he was getting close to the house, he heard people playing music and dancing. ²⁶He called for one of the servants and asked what was happening. ²⁷The servant said to him, 'Your brother has come home. Your father told us to kill the fattened calf to celebrate because your brother returned safe and healthy.' ²⁸But the older brother was angry and did not want to join the celebration. So his father came out and pleaded with him to come in. ²⁹But he replied to his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have worked as hard as a slave for you. I have always obeyed everything you told me to do. But you have never given me so much as a young goat that I could use to host a feast for my friends. ³⁰But now that this son of yours has come back home, after wasting all your money on prostitutes, you have told your servants to kill the fattened calf for a celebration!' ³¹But his father said to him, 'My son, you are always with me, and all that I own is yours. ³²But it is right for us to celebrate and rejoice, because it is as though your brother was dead and is alive again! It is as though he was lost and we have him found again!'"

Chapter 16

¹Jesus also said to his disciples, "Once there was a rich man who had a household manager. One day someone informed the rich man that the manager was doing such a bad job that the rich man was losing lots of money. ²So he called the manager to come to him and said to him, 'What I hear you have been doing is terrible! Give me a final written report of the things you have been managing, because you will no longer be my household manager!'

³Then the manager said to himself, 'My master is going to dismiss me from being his manager, so I have to think of what to do. I am not strong enough to work by digging ditches, and I am ashamed to beg for money. ⁴I know what I will do so that people will take me into their houses {and provide for me} after he dismisses me from my management work! ⁵So he asked everyone who owed his master money to come to him one by one. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶The man replied, '3,000 liters of olive oil.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down, and quickly change it to 1, 500 liters!' ⁷He said to another man, 'How much do you owe?' The man replied, '1,000 baskets of wheat.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill and change it to 800 baskets!'

⁸{When} the master {heard what his manager had done, he} praised the dishonest manager for being so clever. The truth is, the people who belong to this world are more clever than the people who belong to God in how they relate to those around them. ⁹I tell you, use the money you have in this world to make friends for yourselves. Then when that money is gone, those friends will welcome you into their homes, which will last forever. ¹⁰People who faithfully manage small amounts of money will also be honest with much greater amounts. People who are dishonest in the way they manage small amounts of money will also be dishonest with much greater amounts.

¹¹So if you have not faithfully handled the money {God has given you} in this world, he will certainly not trust you with the true riches {of heaven}. ¹²If you have not faithfully managed property that belongs to other people, you should not expect anyone to give you property of your own. ¹³No servant is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. You cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions."

¹⁴When the Pharisees {who were there} heard what Jesus was teaching, they made fun of him because they loved to acquire money. ¹⁵But Jesus said to them, "You try to make other people think that you are righteous, but God knows what you are really like. Keep in mind that God considers to be detestable many things that people praise as very important.

¹⁶The laws that God gave Moses and the things that the prophets wrote were in effect until John the Baptizer came. Since then, I have been preaching the good news about how God will rule as king. Many people {are accepting my message and} are very eagerly trying to become part of the kingdom of God. ¹⁷All of God's laws, even those that seem insignificant, are more permanent than heaven and earth.

¹⁸Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, and any man who marries a woman whose husband has divorced her is also committing adultery."

¹⁹{Jesus also said,} "Once there was a rich man who wore expensive purple and linen clothes. Every day he gave lavish feasts. ²⁰And {every day} people laid a poor man whose name was Lazarus at the gate of the rich man's house. Lazarus' body was covered with sores. ²¹{He was so hungry that} he wanted to eat the scraps of food that fell from the table where the rich man ate. {While he was lying there,} dogs came and licked his sores. ²²Eventually the poor man died. Then the angels took him to be with {his ancestor} Abraham. The rich man also died, and people buried his body. ²³In the place of the dead, the rich man was suffering great pain. He looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus sitting very close to Abraham. ²⁴So the rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, I am suffering very much in this fire! So please pity me and send Lazarus here so that he can dip his finger in water and touch my tongue to cool it!' ²⁵But Abraham replied, 'Child, remember that while you were alive on earth you enjoyed many good things. But Lazarus was miserable. Now he is happy here, and you are suffering. ²⁶Besides that, God has placed a huge ravine between you and us. So those who want to go from here to you there are not able to. Furthermore, no one can cross from there to where we are, either.' ²⁷Then the rich man said, 'If that is so, Father Abraham, I ask you to send Lazarus to my family home. ²⁸I have five brothers {who live there}. Tell him to

warn them so that they do not also come to this place where we suffer great pain!" ²⁹But Abraham replied, "No, I will not do that because your brothers have what Moses and the prophets wrote long ago. They should obey what they wrote!" ³⁰But the rich man replied, "No, Father Abraham, that will not be enough! But if someone from those who have died goes back to them and warns them, they will turn from their sinful behavior." ³¹Abraham said to him, "So they would not obey what Moses and the prophets wrote. Then it would not help even if someone from among the people who have died went and warned them. They would still not believe that they should turn from their sinful behavior."

Chapter 17

¹Jesus said to his disciples, "Things that tempt people to sin will certainly happen. But how terrible it will be for anyone who causes those things to happen! ²It would be better for that person if someone fastened a huge stone around his neck and threw him into the sea than if he were to cause someone to sin whose faith was weak. ³Be careful how you act. If another believer sins, you should rebuke him. If he says that he is sorry for having sinned and asks you to forgive him, then you should forgive him. ⁴Even if he sins against you seven times in one day, if he comes to you each time and says, 'I am sorry for what I did,' you must continue forgiving him."

⁵Then the Representatives said to Jesus, "Give us more faith!" ⁶Jesus replied, "Even if you had faith that was no bigger than this tiny mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Pull yourself out of the ground, roots and all, and plant yourself in the sea,' and it would obey you!"

⁷{Jesus also said,} "Suppose that one of you had a servant who was plowing your fields or taking care of your sheep. After he came into the house from the field, you would not say, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat!'

⁸Instead, you would say to him, 'Prepare a meal for me! Then put on your serving clothes and serve it to me so that I can eat and drink! Afterwards you can eat and drink.' ⁹You would not thank your servant just for doing the work that he had been told to do! ¹⁰Similarly, when you have done everything that God has told you to do, you should say, 'We are only God's servants. We do not deserve to have you thank us. We have only done the things that he told us to do.'"

¹¹As Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road to Jerusalem, they were going through the area between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As Jesus entered a village, ten lepers came toward him, but they stood at some distance away. ¹³They called out, "Jesus, Master, please have pity on us!" ¹⁴When Jesus saw them, he said to them, "Go and have the priests examine you." So they went, and on the way, their leprosy disappeared. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he no longer had leprosy, went back, praising God loudly. ¹⁶{He came to Jesus and} he lay down on the ground with his face at Jesus' feet, and he thanked him. This man was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus said, "I healed ten lepers! I would have expected the other nine to come back as well! ¹⁸This foreign man was the only one who returned to thank God. None of the others came back!" ¹⁹Then he said to the man, "Get up and go on your way. God has healed you because you trusted in me."

²⁰One day some Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will God begin to rule everyone?" He replied, "That will not happen with signs that people can recognize if they watch for them. ²¹People will not be able to say, 'Look! God is ruling here!' or 'God is ruling there!' {Contrary to what you think,} God has already begun to rule within you."

²²Jesus said to his disciples, "There will be a time when you will want to see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully. But you will not see that. ²³People will say to you, 'Look, the Messiah is over there!' or they will say, 'Look, he is here!' {When they say that,} do not follow them. ²⁴For when the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, everyone can see it. Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, come back again, everyone will see me. ²⁵But before that happens, I must suffer in many ways, and people will reject me. ²⁶But when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just like people were doing at the time when Noah lived. ²⁷At that time people ate and drank {as usual}, and they got married {as usual}, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the big boat. But then the flood came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat. ²⁸Similarly, when

Lot lived {in the city of Sodom}, people {there} ate and drank {as usual}. They bought things and they sold things. They planted crops and they built houses {as usual}. ²⁹But on the day that Lot left Sodom, fire and burning sulfur came down from the sky and destroyed all those who had stayed in the city. ³⁰Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return to earth, people will be unprepared. ³¹On that day, those who are outside their houses, with all the things that they own inside the houses, must not take the time to go inside and get them. Similarly, those who are out working in a field must not come back home to get anything. {They must flee quickly.} ³²Remember what happened to Lot's wife! ³³Anyone who continues in his own way of living will die. But anyone who leaves his old way of living {for my sake} will live forever. ³⁴I tell you this: On the night when I return, there will be two people sleeping in one bed. God will take the one who believes in me and leave the other one behind. ³⁵Two women will be grinding grain together. God will take one of them and leave the other one behind." ³⁶^[1] ["There will be two in the field; one will be taken and the other left."] ³⁷His disciples said to him, "Lord, where will this happen?" He replied to them, "Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather to eat it."

17:36 ^[1]

Chapter 18

¹Jesus told his disciples another story to teach them that they should pray continually and not become discouraged {if God did not immediately answer their prayers}. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not revere God and did not care about people. ³There was a widow in that city who kept coming to that judge, saying, 'Please get justice for me against the man who is opposing me in court.' ⁴For a long time the judge refused to help her. But later, he said to himself, 'I do not revere God and I do not care about people. ⁵But this widow keeps bothering me! So I will judge her case and make sure she is treated fairly. I am concerned that if I do not do that, she will exhaust me by continually coming to me!'" ⁶Then Jesus said, "Think carefully about what the unjust judge said. ⁷{Even more} certainly will God{, who is just,} bring about justice for his chosen people, who pray earnestly to him all day long! And he is always patient with them. ⁸I tell you, God will quickly bring about justice for his chosen ones! Nevertheless when I, the Son of Man, come back to earth, there will still be many people who do not believe in me."

⁹Then Jesus also told the following story to some people who thought they were righteous and who looked down on other people. ¹⁰{He said,} "Two men went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee. The other man was someone who collected taxes from the people for the Roman government. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself in this way, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like other people. Some steal money from others. Some treat others unjustly. Some commit adultery. I do not do any of those things. And I am certainly not like this sinful tax collector who cheats people! ¹²I fast on two days during every week, and I give ten percent of all that I earn to the temple!' ¹³But the tax collector stood far away from the other people in the temple courtyard. He would not even look up toward heaven. Instead, he beat on his chest and said, 'O God, please forgive me, because I am a terrible sinner!'" ¹⁴Then Jesus said, "I tell you that as they left to go home, God had forgiven the tax collector, but God had not forgiven the Pharisee. This is because God will humble everyone who exalts himself, and God will exalt everyone who humbles himself."

¹⁵One day people were bringing even their babies to Jesus so that he would put his hands on them and bless them. When the disciples saw this, they told them not to do that. ¹⁶But Jesus called for the children to be brought to him. He said, "Let the little children come to me! Do not stop them, because it is {humble and trusting} people like these children who let God rule their lives. ¹⁷Indeed, I say to you that whoever will not humbly and trustingly let God rule over his life will not accept God's rule at all."

¹⁸Once a Jewish leader asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do in order to have everlasting life?" ¹⁹Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? God is the only one who is truly good!

²⁰{In answer to your question, certainly} you know the commandments {that God gave to Moses for us to obey}: 'Do not commit adultery. Do not murder anyone. Do not steal. Do not give a false report. Honor your father and

mother.” ²¹The man said, “I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young.” ²²When Jesus heard him say that, he replied to him, “You still need to do one more thing. Sell all that you own. Then give the money to people who have very little to live on. The result will be that you will have spiritual riches in heaven. Then come and be my disciple!” ²³The man became very sad when he heard that, because he was extremely rich. ²⁴When Jesus looked at the man and said, “It is very difficult for those who are wealthy to let God rule over them. ²⁵In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich people to let God rule their lives.” ²⁶Those who heard Jesus say that replied, “Then it seems that God will not consider that anyone should have eternal life!” ²⁷But Jesus said, “What is impossible for people is possible for God.” ²⁸Then Peter said, “What about us? We have left everything we had in order to become your disciples.” ²⁹Jesus said to them, “I can assure you that those who have left their homes, their wives, their brothers, their parents, or their children in order to let God rule over them ³⁰will receive in this life many times as much as they left behind and, in the coming age, they will receive everlasting life.”

³¹Jesus took the 12 disciples to a place by themselves. He said to them, “Listen carefully! We are on our way to Jerusalem. While we are there, everything that the prophets wrote long ago about me, the Son of Man, will happen. ³²This will happen when my enemies turn me over to the authorities who are not Jews. They will mock me, treat me with disdain, and spit on me. ³³They will whip me and then they will kill me. But two days later I will become alive again.” ³⁴But the disciples did not understand any of those things that he said. God prevented them from recognizing their significance, so they did not know what Jesus meant by what he was telling them.

³⁵As Jesus and his disciples came near to the city of Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road. He was begging for money. ³⁶When he heard a crowd of people passing by, he kept asking {those around him}, “What is happening?” ³⁷They told him, “{There is a crowd because} Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, is coming down the street.” ³⁸He shouted, “Jesus, you who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” ³⁹Those who were walking at the front of the crowd scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, “You who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” ⁴⁰Jesus stopped walking and commanded the people to bring the man to him. When the blind man came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹“What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, “Lord, I want you to enable me to see!” ⁴²Jesus said to him, “Then I now restore your sight! Because you have trusted in me, I have healed you!” ⁴³Immediately he was able to see. And he went with Jesus, praising God. And when all the people there saw this, they also praised God.

Chapter 19

¹Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city. ²There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was in charge of collecting taxes, and he was very rich. ³He wanted to see Jesus, but he could not see him over the crowd. He was a very short man {and there were many people around Jesus}. ⁴So he ran farther down the road. He climbed a sycamore fig tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. ⁵When Jesus got there, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, I have to stay at your house tonight!” ⁶So he came down quickly. He was glad to welcome Jesus into his home. ⁷But the people who saw Jesus go there grumbled, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a real sinner!” ⁸Then Zacchaeus stood up while they were eating and said to Jesus, “Lord, I want you to know that I am going to give half of what I own to poor people. And as for the people whom I have cheated, I will pay them back four times the amount I took from them.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Today God has saved this household, because this man has shown that he is a true descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰Remember this: I, the Son of Man, came to find and save people {like you} who have been disobeying God.”

¹¹The people were listening to everything Jesus said. He was getting close to Jerusalem{, and he knew that the people had a wrong idea}. They thought he would begin to rule as king over God’s people as soon as he got to Jerusalem. So Jesus decided to tell them another story {to correct that idea}. ¹²He said, “A prince was preparing to go to a distant country so that a higher king could give him the right to rule over the country where he lived. After he received it, he would come back to rule his people. ¹³{Before he left,} he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them an equal amount of money. He said to them, ‘Do business with this money until I return!’ {Then he

left.} ¹⁴But many people of his country hated him. So they sent some messengers to follow him and say {to the higher king}, 'We do not want this man to be our king!' ¹⁵{But he was made king anyway. Later} he returned as the new king. Then he called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had gained by doing business with the money he had given them. ¹⁶The first servant came to him and said, 'Sir, with your money I have earned ten times as much!' ¹⁷He said to this man, 'You are a good servant! You have done very well! Because you have faithfully taken care of a small amount of money, I will give you ten cities to rule over.' ¹⁸Then the second servant came and said, 'Sir, the money you gave me is now worth five times as much!' ¹⁹He also said to that servant, '{Well done!} I will put you over five cities.' ²⁰Then another servant came. He said, 'Sir, here is your money. I wrapped it up in a cloth and hid it to keep it safe. ²¹I was afraid that you would take everything I earned. I know you are a hard man who takes things from others that do not really belong to you. You are like a farmer who harvests grain that another farmer has planted.' ²²He said to that servant, 'You wicked servant! I will condemn you by the words you just said. You said I am a hard man. You said I take what does not belong to me. You said I am like a farmer who harvests what another farmer has planted. ²³So you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I could have collected that amount plus the interest it would have earned!' ²⁴Then the king said to those who were standing near, 'Take the money from him and give it to the servant who made ten times as much!' ²⁵They protested, 'But sir, he already has a lot of money!' ²⁶But the king said, 'I tell you this: To the people who use well what they have received, I will give even more. But from the people who do not use well what they have received, I will take away even what they already have. ²⁷Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and execute them while I am watching!'"

²⁸After Jesus said those things, he traveled farther along on the road up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When they got close to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples on ahead. ³⁰He told them, "Go to the village just ahead of you. As you enter it, there you will see a young donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying the donkey?' say to him, 'Jesus needs it.'" ³²So the two disciples went to the village and found the donkey, just as Jesus had told them. ³³As they were untying it, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying our donkey?" ³⁴They replied, "Jesus needs it." And the owners gave them permission to use it. ³⁵Then the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus. They threw their robes on the donkey's back and helped Jesus get on it. ³⁶Then, as he rode along, others spread their robes on the road in front of him to honor him. ³⁷As Jesus approached the road that goes down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of his disciples began to praise God with loud, joyful shouts for all the great miracles that they had seen him do. ³⁸They were saying things like, "May God bless our king who comes with God's authority! May there be peace between God in heaven and us his people, and may everyone praise God!" ³⁹Some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell your disciples to stop saying those things!" ⁴⁰He replied, "I tell you this: If these people were silent, the stones themselves would shout to praise me!"

⁴¹When Jesus came near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he cried about its people. ⁴²He said, "I wish that today you people knew how to have God's peace. But now you are unable to know this. ⁴³I want you to know this: You are going to experience difficult times. Your enemies will come and set up a barricade around your city. They will surround the city and attack it on all sides. ⁴⁴They will {break through the walls and} destroy them and the rest of the city. They will kill all of you. They will completely demolish everything. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you!"

⁴⁵Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courtyard. He began to force the people who were selling things there to leave. ⁴⁶He told them, "The Scriptures say, 'God's temple should be a place where people pray.' But you have made it 'a hideout for thieves!'"

⁴⁷Each day during that week, Jesus was teaching people at the temple. The chief priests, the teachers of religious laws, and other Jewish leaders were trying to find a way to kill him. ⁴⁸But they did not find any way to do it, because very many people were eager to hear him.

Chapter 20

¹One day during that week, Jesus was teaching the people at the temple and telling them God's good message. As he was doing that, the chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and some other elders came to him. ²They said to him, "Tell us, what right do you have to do these things? And who gave you this right?" ³He replied, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me ⁴about John baptizing people: Did God command him to baptize or did humans command him?" ⁵They discussed this among themselves. They said, "If we answer, 'God commanded him,' then he will say, 'So why did you not believe him?' ⁶But if we say, 'It was only humans who told him to baptize,' the people will stone us to death, because most of them believe that John was a prophet {whom God sent}." ⁷So they replied that they did not know who told John to baptize. ⁸Then Jesus said to them, "Just as you will not tell me, I will not tell you who sent me to do those things."

⁹Then Jesus told the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some people who would take care of it. Then he went to another country and stayed there for a long time. ¹⁰When it was time to harvest the grapes, this owner sent a servant to the people who were taking care of the vineyard. He wanted them to give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. But {after the servant arrived,} they beat that servant and sent him away without giving him any grapes. ¹¹Later, the owner sent another servant, but they also beat and shamed that servant. They sent him away without any grapes. ¹²Still later, the owner sent yet another servant. The farmers wounded this servant too and forced him to leave the vineyard. ¹³So the owner of the vineyard said to himself, 'What should I do now? I will send my son, whom I love very much. They will probably respect him.' ¹⁴{So he sent his son,} but when the people who were caring for the vineyard saw him coming, they said to each other, 'Here comes the man who will some day inherit this vineyard! Let us kill him! Then the vineyard will be ours!' ¹⁵So they dragged him outside the vineyard, and they killed him. I will tell you what the owner of the vineyard will do to them! ¹⁶He will come and kill those people who were taking care of the vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it." When the people listening to Jesus heard this, they said, "May a situation like this never happen!" ¹⁷But Jesus looked directly at them and said, "You can say that, but think about the meaning of these words that are written in the Scriptures.

'The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.

¹⁸This stone will break to pieces everyone who falls on it, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'"

¹⁹The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws realized that he was accusing them when he told the story about those wicked people. So they immediately tried to find a way to arrest him. {But they did not arrest him,} because they were afraid of what the people would do if they did so. ²⁰So they watched him carefully. They also sent spies {to talk to Jesus} who pretended to be sincere, but who really wanted to get Jesus to say something wrong. They wanted to {be able to accuse him of encouraging resistance to the Roman government so that they could} turn him over to the governor {of the province}. ²¹One of them said to him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right. You do that even if important people do not like it. You teach truthfully what God wants us to do. ²²{So tell us what you think about this matter.} Is it right for us to pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?" ²³But he knew that they were trying to trick him to get him into trouble either with the Jews, who hated to pay those taxes, or with the Roman government. So he said to them, ²⁴"Show me a Roman coin. Then tell me whose picture and name are on it." So they {showed him a coin and} said, "It has the picture and name of Caesar." ²⁵He said to them, "In that case, give to the government what belongs to it, and give to God what belongs to him." ²⁶The spies could find nothing wrong with anything that Jesus said while the people were standing around him. The spies were so amazed at his answer that they did not say anything more.

²⁷After that, some Sadducees came to Jesus. Their group of Jews taught that no one would rise from the dead. They also intended to ask Jesus a challenging question. ²⁸One of them said to him, "Teacher, Moses taught us Jews what to do if a man dies who has a wife but no children. His brother should marry the widow so that she can have a child by him. People will then consider that child a descendant of the man who died. ²⁹Well, there were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman, but before she had any children, he died, leaving her as a widow.

³⁰The second brother followed this law and married the widow, but the same thing happened to him. ³¹Then the third brother married her, but the same thing happened again. In the end, all seven brothers, one by one, married that woman but died without having any children. ³²Afterwards, the woman died, too. ³³Therefore, if it is true that there will be a time when people who have died will become alive again, whose wife do you think that woman will be then? Keep in mind that she was married to all seven brothers!" ³⁴Jesus replied to them, "In this world, men marry women, and parents give daughters in marriage to men. ³⁵But the people whom God will consider worthy of being in heaven when he brings them back to life after they have died will not marry. ³⁶{They do not marry} because they cannot die anymore. Rather, they are like the angels {who live forever}. They are God's children, since God has made them alive again after they have died. ³⁷{Now that I have answered your question about marriage, I will show from Scripture} that God does make people alive again after they have died. Even Moses wrote about this. In the place where he describes meeting God at the burning bush, he records how the Lord called himself 'the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' {God would not have said that if he had not made those men alive again and he were not still their God.} ³⁸After all, he is not the God of people who are dead. He is the God of people who are alive, because to God, everyone remains alive {even after they die}."

³⁹Some of the teachers of the Jewish law {who were there} replied, "Teacher, you have answered very well!" ⁴⁰{The scribes said this} because the people who had been trying to trap Jesus {had stopped asking him difficult questions. He had answered so well that they} were afraid to ask him anything else.

⁴¹So in return, {Jesus asked them a difficult question of his own.} He said, "Why do people say that the Messiah is {only} a descendant of King David? ⁴²Consider that David himself wrote in the Book of Psalms {about the Messiah}, 'God said to my Lord,

"Sit here next to me on my right side{, in that position of great honor}.

⁴³{Sit here} while I completely defeat your enemies.'"

⁴⁴In this psalm, King David calls the Messiah 'my Lord.' {That is a title of great respect.} So how could the Messiah be David's descendant? {It is the descendant who should show great respect to the ancestor.}"

⁴⁵Then, while all the other people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁶"Make sure that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like to put on long robes and walk around to make people think that they are very important. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At dinner parties they like to sit in the places for the most honored people.

⁴⁷They {also} steal all the property of widows. But to make other people think that they are righteous, they pray for a long time {in public}. God will condemn them strictly for what they have done."

Chapter 21

¹Then Jesus looked up {from where he was sitting} and saw rich people putting their gifts {of money} into the offering boxes {in the temple courtyard}. ²He also saw a poor widow put two small copper coins into one of the boxes. ³And he said {to his disciples}, "The truth is that this poor widow has put more {into the offering box} than all {of these rich people}. ⁴Let me tell you why that is true. All those {rich people} gave a lot of money, but it was extra money that they did not really need. But this widow, who is very poor, gave all the money that she had, even though she really did need it to live on."

⁵Some {of Jesus' disciples} were talking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and decorations that people had given. But Jesus said, ⁶"{Let me tell you what is going to happen to} these things that you are admiring. Someday your enemies will demolish them entirely."

⁷Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will show that these things are about to take place?" ⁸Jesus replied, "Do not let anyone mislead you. For many people will come and each will claim to be

me. Each will say about himself, 'I am the Messiah!' They will also say, 'The time is almost here when God will rule as king!' Do not believe what they are saying! ⁹Also, you will hear about wars and people fighting each other. Things like that must happen before the end {of the world} comes. So {when you hear about those things,} do not be afraid.

¹⁰Various people groups will attack each other, and the people of different kingdoms will fight each other. ¹¹And in various places there will be great earthquakes. There will also be famines and terrible diseases. Many things will happen that will cause people to be very afraid. People will see strange things in the sky {that will show that something very important is going to happen}. ¹²But before all these things {happen}, your enemies will seize you and treat you badly. They will bring you to the synagogues{, whose judges will put you on trial} and {put you in the} prisons. Your enemies will also have kings and high government authorities put you on trial because you believe in me. ¹³That will be a time for you to tell them the truth about me. ¹⁴So resolve firmly not to worry ahead of time about what you will say to defend yourselves, ¹⁵because I will give you the right words so that you will know what to say. As a result, none of the people accusing you will be able to say that you are wrong. ¹⁶And even your parents and brothers and sisters and {other} relatives and friends will betray you, and they will kill some of you. ¹⁷Most people will hate you because you believe in me. ¹⁸But your entire being will be safe {spiritually}. ¹⁹If you go through difficult times and prove that you trust God, after you die your souls will live on in God's presence.

²⁰When you see armies surround {the city of} Jerusalem, then you will know that they will soon destroy that city.

²¹At that time those of you who are in {other places in the province of} Judea must escape to the mountains. And those of you who are in this city must leave. Those of you who are in the nearby countryside must not come into the city. ²²{You should run away} because God will punish {the city of Jerusalem} at this time. {When he does that,} what God has said in the Scriptures about this will come true. ²³When this happens, how terrible it will be for pregnant women and for those who are nursing their babies. There will be great suffering in the land. God will be angry with these people and punish them severely. ²⁴Many of them will die because soldiers will kill them with their weapons. Their enemies will take others as prisoners and send them to many places around the world. The Gentiles will control {the city of} Jerusalem for as long as God allows."

²⁵"At this time, strange things will happen to the sun, the moon, and the stars. And on earth, people groups will become very frightened. They will be as afraid as they would be in a roaring ocean with huge waves. ²⁶People will be so afraid that they will faint because they are waiting for what will happen next in the world. The stars in the sky will move out of their usual places. ²⁷Then all people will see me, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds powerfully and with brilliant light. ²⁸So when those terrible things begin to happen, assume a posture of confidence, because God will soon rescue you."

²⁹Then Jesus gave them an example. He said, "Think about the fig trees, and even all the trees. ³⁰When you see that their leaves are sprouting, you know that it is the beginning of summer. ³¹In the same way, when you see these things that I have just described happening, you will know then that God will soon show himself as king. ³²I am telling you the truth. The people who see the first of the signs I have described will definitely live to see all these things happen. ³³You may think of the sky and the land as permanent. They are not, but my words are permanent.

³⁴Be very careful to control yourselves. If you get drunk, your minds will not be alert afterwards. And if you worry about day-to-day matters, you will become distracted. {Then you will not be paying attention to the signs I have told you about, and} I will surprise you when I return. ³⁵{I will come so suddenly that} it will be like when a trap springs closed on an animal. {So you need to be watching for my return,} because it will affect every person in the world. ³⁶So you must be always ready for my coming. Pray that you will be able to stay faithful to me as you experience these difficult things that I have been talking about. That way I, the Messiah, will declare you innocent {when I come to judge the world}."

³⁷Each day Jesus was teaching people at the temple. But every evening he went {out of the city} and stayed all night on the Mount of Olives. ³⁸And early every morning, great crowds of people came to the temple to listen to him {as he taught}.

Chapter 22

¹It was now almost time for the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, which people also called the Passover. ²The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws were looking for a way to have Jesus killed without starting a riot among the {many} people {who thought he was a great man}.

³Then Satan entered into Judas, whose other name was Iscariot. He was one of the 12 disciples. ⁴He went and talked with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard about how he might help them capture Jesus.

⁵They were very pleased {when he offered to do that}. They said they would pay him money {if he did it}. ⁶So Judas agreed, and then he started looking for a way to help them capture Jesus where the crowd would not see it.

⁷Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came. This was the day when Jewish people had to kill the lambs that they would eat for the Passover celebration. ⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John out with these instructions: "Go and prepare the meal for the Passover celebration so that we can all eat it together." ⁹They replied to him, "Where do you want us to prepare the meal?" ¹⁰He answered, "Listen carefully. When you go into the city, a man carrying a large jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹Say to the owner of the house, 'Our teacher says to show us the room where he can eat the Passover meal together with us, his disciples.' ¹²He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be all ready for entertaining guests. Prepare the meal for us there." ¹³So the two disciples went {into the city}. They found everything to be just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared {the meal for} the Passover celebration there.

¹⁴When it was time to eat the meal, Jesus came and sat down with the Representatives. ¹⁵He said to them, "I have wanted very much to eat this special Passover supper with you before I die. ¹⁶I tell you, the next time I eat it will be when God gives it its deepest meaning when he rules everywhere as king." ¹⁷Then he took a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He told them, "Take this wine and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸{I want you to do this} because, I tell you, I will not drink wine again until God rules everywhere as king." ¹⁹Then he took some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces and gave it to them to eat. As he did so, he said, "This bread is my body, which I am about to sacrifice for you. Do this again later to honor me." ²⁰In the same way, after they had eaten the meal, he took the cup of wine and said, "This is the new covenant that I will make using my own blood, which will flow out of my wounds for you when I die. ²¹But I want you all to know that the person who will hand me over to my enemies is here eating with me. ²²{I say this} because I, the Son of Man, will indeed die in the way that God has planned. But how terrible it will be for the man who hands me over {to my enemies}!" ²³Then they all began to ask each other which of them would actually be prepared to betray Jesus.

²⁴After that, they began to argue among themselves about which one of them they should think was the most important person. ²⁵Jesus responded to them, "The kings of the Gentile nations like to show people that they are powerful. Yet they give themselves the name 'Ones Who Help the People.' ²⁶But you should not be like those rulers! Instead, the most honored people among you should act as if they were the least honored ones. Anyone who leads must act like a servant. ²⁷For you know that the important person is the one who eats at the table, not the servant who brings the food. But I, your leader, have been setting an example for you by serving you while I have been among you

²⁸You are the people who have stayed with me during all the hard things I have suffered. ²⁹So now I am appointing you to important positions in which you will rule, just as my Father has appointed me to rule as a king. ³⁰You will sit and eat and drink with me when I become king. In fact, you will sit on thrones and judge the people of the 12 tribes of Israel."

³¹"Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has asked {God} to {let him} test all of you, the way someone shakes grain in a sieve{, and God has permitted him to do that}. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon. {I have asked God} that you will not completely stop believing in me. So when you decide that you truly do believe in me, encourage the others {to believe in me as well}." ³³Peter replied to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison. I am even willing to

die with you!" ³⁴Jesus replied, "Peter, I want you to know that this night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!"

³⁵Then Jesus asked the disciples, "When I sent you out {to the villages, and you went} without any money, food, or sandals, was there anything you needed but could not get?" They replied, "No, there was nothing!" ³⁶Then Jesus said, "But, now, if anyone {among you} has some money, he should take it with him. Also, whoever has food should take it with him. And whoever does not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one!" ³⁷I tell you this because what a prophet wrote about me in the Scriptures must take place: 'People treated him like a criminal.' Everything the Scriptures say about me is going to happen. ³⁸The disciples replied, "Lord, look! We have two swords!" He answered, "We will not need more than two."

³⁹Jesus left the city and went to the Mount of Olives, as he usually did. His disciples went with him. ⁴⁰When Jesus came {with his disciples} to the place where he often spent the night, he said to them, "Pray that God will help you not to sin when you are tempted." ⁴¹Then he went about 30 meters from them, knelt down, and prayed. ⁴²He said, "Father, if you are willing, please allow me not to experience the terrible things that are about to happen. But do not do what I want. Do what you want." ⁴³[¹] Then an angel from heaven came to him and gave him courage. ⁴⁴[²] He was suffering greatly. So he prayed very intensely. His sweat was falling to the ground like large drops of blood.] ⁴⁵When Jesus got up from praying, he returned to his disciples. He discovered that they were sleeping. They were very sad and this had made them tired. ⁴⁶He {woke them up and} said to them, "This is no time for you to be sleeping! Get up! Pray that {God will help you so that} nothing tempts you to sin."

⁴⁷While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd of people came to him. Judas, one of the 12 disciples, was guiding them. He came up to Jesus to greet him with a kiss on the cheek. ⁴⁸But Jesus said to him, "Judas, how dare you use a kiss to hand me, the Son of Man, over to my enemies!" ⁴⁹When the disciples realized what was happening, they said, "Lord, should we use our weapons {to keep them from arresting you}?" ⁵⁰One of them {drew his sword and} struck the servant of the high priest, but {only} cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "Do not do any more of that!" Then he touched the servant where he had been wounded and healed him. ⁵²⁻⁵³Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guards, and the Jewish elders who had come to arrest him, "It is surprising that you have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a robber. For many days I was with you in the temple, but you did not try to arrest me at all! But this is the time you are doing what you want. It is also the time when Satan is doing the evil things as he wants to do."

⁵⁴The Jewish leaders and soldiers seized Jesus and led him away. They brought him to the high priest's house. Peter followed them {from a safe distance} far behind. ⁵⁵Some people lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together. Peter came and sat among them. ⁵⁶A female servant saw Peter sitting there as the fire shone upon him. She looked at him carefully and said, "This man was also with the one they have arrested!" ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, "Young lady, I do not know him!" ⁵⁸A little later someone else saw Peter and said, "You also are one of those who were with the man they arrested!" But Peter said, "No, mister, I am not one of them!" ⁵⁹About an hour later someone else said loudly, "{The way that} this man {speaks shows that he} is from {the region of} Galilee. So he must certainly have come here with the man they arrested!" ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Mister, that is not true!" Immediately a rooster crowed, while Peter was still speaking. ⁶¹Jesus turned around and looked right at Peter. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him: "This night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you know me." ⁶²And he went out of the courtyard and cried with great sorrow.

⁶³The men who were guarding Jesus made fun of him and beat him. ⁶⁴They put a blindfold on him {so he could not see and then took turns hitting him}. They said to him, "Show us that you are a prophet! Tell us who just hit you!"

⁶⁵They said many other {cruel} things about him, mocking him.

⁶⁶At dawn the next morning, many of the Jewish leaders gathered together. In this group were the chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws. They had the soldiers bring Jesus into the Jewish council chamber. ⁶⁷There they said to him, "If you are the Messiah, tell us!" But he replied, "If I say that I am the Messiah, you will not believe me. ⁶⁸But if I ask you whether you think I am the Messiah, you will not answer me. ⁶⁹But from now on, I, the

Messiah, will be sitting next to almighty God {and ruling}!" ⁷⁰Then they all asked, "If that is so, are you {saying that you are} the Son of God?" He answered, "Yes, what you are saying is true." ⁷¹Then they said to each other, "We ourselves have heard him say {that he is equal to God}! And so we certainly do not need any more people to testify against him {on a charge of blasphemy}!"

22:43 ^[1]

22:44 ^[2]

Chapter 23

¹Then the whole group got up and took Jesus to Pilate{, the Roman governor}. ²They accused him {in front of Pilate}. They said, "We have seen this man {causing trouble by} misleading our people. He has been telling them to not pay the taxes that Caesar, the Roman emperor, has imposed. Also, he has been saying that he is the Messiah, a king!" ³Pilate then asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is just as you have asked me." ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowd, "This man is not guilty of any crime." ⁵But the group from the Jewish ruling council kept accusing Jesus. They said, "He is trying to get the people to riot! He has been teaching his ideas throughout all of {the region of} Judea. He started doing that in {the region of} Galilee, and now he is doing it here as well!"

⁶When Pilate heard what they said, he asked, "Does this man come from {the region of} Galilee?" ⁷When Pilate found out that Jesus was from Galilee, where Herod Antipas ruled, he sent Jesus to him. Herod was also in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, because he had wanted to see Jesus for a long time. This was because Herod had heard many things about Jesus, and he wanted to see him perform a miracle. ⁹So he asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not reply to any of them. ¹⁰And the chief priests and some experts in the Jewish laws stood near Jesus, accusing him very strongly {of committing many crimes}. ¹¹Then Herod and his soldiers insulted Jesus and made fun of him. They put expensive clothes on him {to pretend that he was a king}. Then Herod sent him back to Pilate. ¹²Until that time the two men had been very hostile to each other, but on that day Herod and Pilate became friends.

¹³Pilate then gathered together the chief priests and other Jewish leaders and the crowd that was still there. ¹⁴He said to them, "You brought this man to me, saying that he has been leading the people to revolt. But I want you to know that after examining him while you were listening, I conclude that he is not guilty of doing any of the things you said he did. ¹⁵Also, Herod sent him back to us {without punishing him}. That means that he too {concluded that he was not guilty}. So it is clear that this man has not done anything for which he deserves to die. ¹⁶So I will {tell my soldiers to} whip him and then set him free." ¹⁷^[1] [{Pilate said this because} he had to set one prisoner free at every Passover celebration.] ¹⁸But the whole crowd shouted together, "Put this man to death! Set Barabbas free for us instead!" ¹⁹Now Barabbas was a man who had led some people in the city {of Jerusalem} to rebel against the Roman government. He was also a murderer. He was in prison because of these crimes. ²⁰But Pilate wanted very much to set Jesus free, so he tried to speak to the crowd again. ²¹But they kept on shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" ²²Pilate then spoke to the crowd a third time. "No! He has not committed any crime! He has not done anything for which he deserves to die. So I will have my soldiers whip him, and then I will set him free." ²³But the people in the crowd kept shouting to insist that Pilate execute Jesus on a cross. Finally, because they continued to shout so loudly, they persuaded Pilate. ²⁴So Pilate declared that he would do what they wanted. ²⁵Then Pilate set free the man whom the crowd was asking him to release. That man was in prison because he had fought against the government and murdered people! Pilate then commanded the soldiers to take Jesus and do what the crowd wanted.

²⁶Now there was a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene {in Africa}. He was coming into Jerusalem from the countryside. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, they grabbed hold of Simon. They {took from Jesus the cross that they had made him carry, and they} put it on Simon's shoulders. They told him to carry it and follow behind Jesus. ²⁷Now a large crowd was walking behind Jesus. In the crowd were many women who were beating on their chests {to show their grief} and wailing {sorrowfully} for him. ²⁸But {instead of accepting their sympathy,}

Jesus turned to these women and said, "You women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me! Instead, weep over {the terrible things that are going to happen to} you and your children! ²⁹For I want you to know that there will {soon} be a time when people will say, 'How fortunate are the women who have never given birth to children or nursed babies!' ³⁰Then the people in this city will say, 'We wish that the mountains would fall on top of us and that the hills would cover us up!' ³¹Right now it is difficult for people to do bad things to others, just as it is difficult to set fire to fresh wood. But later, people will easily be able to do terrible things to others, just as it is easy to set fire to dry wood."

³²Two other men, who were criminals, were also walking with Jesus to the place where the Romans would execute them. ³³When they got to the place whose name was The Skull, there the soldiers crucified Jesus, nailing him to a cross. They did the same thing to the two criminals. They put one of them at the right side of Jesus and the other at his left side. ³⁴^[2] [But Jesus said, "Father, please forgive these people. They do not realize what they are doing."] Then the soldiers divided his clothes and gambled with something like dice to determine which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁵Many people stood nearby, watching. They were making fun of Jesus. The Jewish leaders did the same thing. They said, "He saved other people! If God has really chosen him to be the Messiah, he should save himself!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him and offered him some sour wine. ³⁷They said to him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸On the cross above his head, the soldiers also fastened a sign that stated, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who was hanging {on a cross next to Jesus also} insulted him. He said, "If you really were the Messiah, you would save yourself, and you would save us too!" ⁴⁰But the other criminal scolded him {for saying that}. He told him, "You should be afraid of God {punishing you}! You are also dying on a cross{, and soon God will judge you}. ⁴¹The two of us deserve {to die}. They are punishing us as we deserve for the evil things that we did. But the man you are insulting did nothing wrong!" ⁴²Then he said to Jesus, "Jesus, please think about me and treat me well when you begin to rule as king!" ⁴³Jesus replied, "I want you to know that today you will be with me in paradise!"

⁴⁴By then it was about noontime. But it became dark throughout that whole area until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁵There was no light from the sun. And the {thick} curtain {that closed off the Most Holy Place} in the temple split into two pieces. ⁴⁶When that happened, Jesus shouted loudly, "Father, I put my spirit into your care!" After he said that, he stopped breathing and died.

⁴⁷When the centurion {who was commanding the soldiers} saw what happened, he said, "Indeed, this man did nothing wrong!" What he said honored God. ⁴⁸When the crowd of people who had gathered to see these men die saw what had actually happened, they went back to their homes, hitting their chests to show that they were sorrowful. ⁴⁹{But when the rest of the crowd left,} all of Jesus' acquaintances, including the women who had come with him from {the region of} Galilee, kept watching what happened from where they were standing, some distance away.

⁵⁰There was a man named Joseph {who lived in Jerusalem}. He was a good and righteous man who was a member of the Jewish Council. ⁵¹But he had not agreed with the other Council members when they decided to kill Jesus and when they planned how to do it. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea. He was waiting expectantly for the time when God would send his king to begin to rule. ⁵²Joseph went to Pilate and asked Pilate to permit him to take Jesus' body and bury it. {Pilate gave him permission,} ⁵³So Joseph took Jesus' body down {from the cross}. He wrapped it in a linen cloth. Then he put Jesus' body in a burial chamber that someone had cut into a rock cliff. No one had ever put a body in that chamber before. ⁵⁴This happened on the day when the Jewish people got ready for their day of rest. It was soon going to be sunset, the start of the Sabbath. ⁵⁵The women who had come with Jesus from {the district of} Galilee followed {Joseph and the men who were with him}. They saw the burial chamber, and they saw how the men laid Jesus' body inside it. ⁵⁶Then the women went back to where they were staying in order to prepare spices and ointments {to put on Jesus' body}. However, they stopped working when the Sabbath began, just as the Jewish law required.

23:17 ^[1]23:34 ^[2]

Chapter 24

¹Very early in the morning on Sunday, those women went to the burial chamber. They brought with them the spices that they had prepared {to put on the body of Jesus}. ²{When they arrived,} they discovered that somebody had rolled away the stone {that had been closing off the entrance} to the burial chamber. ³They went into {the burial chamber}, but the body of Jesus was not there! ⁴They did not know what to think about that. Then suddenly two men stood by them wearing bright, shining clothes! ⁵This made the women very frightened. They bowed down low to the ground. The two men said to them, "You should not be looking for someone who is alive in a place where they bury the bodies of dead people! ⁶He is not here. No, he has come back to life! Recall that while he was still with you in Galilee, he said to you, ⁷'They will have to hand me, the Son of Man, over to sinful men. Those men will kill me by nailing me to a cross. But two days later, I will become alive again.'" ⁸The women recalled what Jesus had told them. ⁹So they left the burial chamber and went to the 11 Representatives and the other disciples of Jesus and told them what happened. ¹⁰The women who told these things to them were Mary from Magdala village, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them. ¹¹But they thought this report was foolishness, so they did not believe the women. ¹²However, Peter decided {to see whether the story was true}. He ran to the burial chamber. He stooped down {and looked inside}. He saw the linen cloths {in which Jesus' body had been wrapped, but Jesus was not there}. So he left the tomb, puzzling over what had happened.

¹³That same day two of Jesus' disciples were walking to an outlying village named Emmaus. It was about ten kilometers from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about all the things that had happened {to Jesus}. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing {those things}, Jesus himself approached them and started walking with them. ¹⁶But God prevented them from realizing that it was Jesus. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "What have you two been talking about while you were walking?" They stopped, and they had very sad expressions on their faces. ¹⁸But then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person who is visiting Jerusalem who does not know about the events that have happened there in recent days!" ¹⁹He said to them, "What events?" They replied, "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was a prophet. God enabled him to perform great miracles and to teach wonderful messages. Most people thought he was wonderful. ²⁰But our chief priests and leaders handed him over {to the Roman authorities}. They sentenced him to die, and they killed him by nailing him to a cross. ²¹We were hoping that he was the one who would free us Israelites from our enemies! But this does not seem possible now, since three days have passed since the Romans executed him. ²²In spite of this, some women from our group amazed us. Early this morning they went to the chamber {where Jesus was buried}, ²³but the body of Jesus was not there! They came back and told us they had seen some angels in a vision. The angels said that Jesus was alive! ²⁴Then some of those who were with us {when the women came and said this} went to the burial chamber. They saw that things were exactly as the women had reported. But they did not see Jesus." ²⁵Then Jesus said to them, "You two foolish men! You are so slow to believe all that the prophets have written about the Messiah! ²⁶You should certainly have known that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer all those things {and die}, and then receive great honor from God!" ²⁷Then Jesus explained to them all the things that the Scriptures said about himself. He started with what Moses wrote, and then he explained what all the prophets had written.

²⁸When they had nearly reached the village where the two men were going, it appeared that Jesus was going to keep walking down the road. ²⁹But they pleaded with him {not to do that}. They said, "Stay with us tonight, because it is late in the afternoon and it will soon be dark." So he went in {to the house} to stay with them. ³⁰When they all sat down to eat, Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and began to give some to the two men. ³¹And then God enabled them to recognize him. But immediately he disappeared! ³²They said to each other, "While we were walking along the road and he was talking with us and enabling us to understand the Scriptures, we got so excited inside! {It all made sense that the Messiah would have to suffer but then receive great honor.}" ³³So they left immediately and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the 11 Representatives and some

others who had gathered together with them. ³⁴They told those two men, "It is true that Jesus has become alive again. He has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then those two men told the others what had happened as they were walking along the road. They also told them how they both recognized Jesus as he broke some bread for them.

³⁶As they were saying that, Jesus himself suddenly appeared among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!" ³⁷But {they were not peaceful.} They were startled and afraid because they thought that they were seeing a ghost! ³⁸He said to them, "You should not be alarmed! And you should not doubt {that I am alive}. ³⁹Look at {the wounds in my hands} and my feet! That way you can be sure that it is really I myself. Ghosts do not have bodies, as you see that I have, and you can touch me to prove that my body is real." ⁴⁰After he said that, he showed them {the wounds in} his hands and his feet. ⁴¹They were so glad that they could still hardly believe {that he was really alive}. So he said to them, "Do you have something here that I could eat?" ⁴²So they gave him a piece of roasted fish. ⁴³While they were watching, he took it and ate it.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, "I will repeat what I told you while I was with you before. God was going to make happen everything that he said about me{, the Messiah.} throughout all of the Scriptures." ⁴⁵Then he enabled them to understand the {things that} the Scriptures {said about him}. He said to them, ⁴⁶"This is what you can read in the Scriptures: that the Messiah would suffer {and die}, but on the third day after that, he would become alive again. ⁴⁷{The Scriptures also say that} those who believe in the Messiah would go and announce on his behalf that God will forgive people who stop sinning. I want you to do this, starting here in Jerusalem and going to every people group in the world. ⁴⁸You {must tell people that you} saw everything happen to me that the Scriptures said would happen to the Messiah. ⁴⁹And I am going to send the Holy Spirit to you, as my Father promised. But you must stay in this city until God gives you the power {of the Holy Spirit}."

⁵⁰Then Jesus led them outside {the city} until they came near {the village of} Bethany. There he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹As he was doing that, he left them and went up to heaven. ⁵²After they worshiped him, they returned to Jerusalem very joyfully. ⁵³Each day they went to the temple and spent time worshiping God there.

John

Chapter 1

¹The Word existed before the universe existed. The Word was with God. The Word also was God. ²He, the Word, was with God before the universe existed. ³God made everything through him. God made every single thing in the universe with him. ⁴The Word gives eternal life, and that eternal life is {God's good and true} light {that he revealed} to humans. ⁵God revealed {his good and true} light to the evil world, and that evil world did not vanquish it.

⁶God sent a man named John {who was known as John the Baptizer}. ⁷He came in order to declare to people about {Jesus, who is} the light. {He declared this} so that everyone might trust in the light by means of his {testimony}. ⁸John himself was not that light, but he came in order to tell people about the light. ⁹That true light was {Jesus,} who revealed God's truth and goodness to everyone. {He was} that light that was coming into the world.

¹⁰The Word was in the world, and he created the universe. Nevertheless, the people of the world did not recognize him. ¹¹The Word came to his own people, {the Jews,} but they rejected him. ¹²But to everyone who accepted him and trusted in him he gave the right to become God's children. ¹³These children of God were not spiritually born by means of normal human birth, nor by human desire, nor by the desire of their fathers. Rather, they were spiritually born by God.

¹⁴The Word became a real human being and temporarily lived here {where we live}. We have seen him display his glorious nature. {That is} the glorious nature of the Unique Son who came from the Father. He fully possesses God's kind acts and true teachings.

¹⁵John the Baptizer was telling people about the Word. And he shouted {to those around him}, "I told you that someone would come after me {and that} he is much more important than I am because he existed long before me." ¹⁶{We know the Word fully possesses God's kind acts and true teachings} because all of us have benefited from what he fully possesses, {having benefited from} one kind act after another. ¹⁷{This is} because God gave his laws {to the Israelites} by Moses. But God's kind acts and true message came into full existence by Jesus the Messiah. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. But Jesus, the Unique One, is God. He is close to God the Father, and he himself has revealed the Father.

¹⁹This is what John the Baptizer testified when the Jewish leaders sent some priests and Levites from the city of Jerusalem in order to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰{At that time} John emphatically confessed, "I am not the Messiah!" ²¹Then they asked him, "{If that is so,} then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "No." They asked again, "Are you the Prophet {whom God said would come}?" John answered, "No." ²²So these priests and Levites asked John once more, "Who are you? {Tell us} so that we can report {what you say} to those leaders who sent us. Who do you claim to be?" ²³John told them, "I am the person shouting in the desolate area to prepare yourselves to receive the Lord when he comes. {I am whom} the prophet Isaiah foretold."

²⁴These priests and Levites whom the leaders in Jerusalem sent to John were Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, then why are you baptizing people?" ²⁶John replied, "I am baptizing people with water, but there is someone now among you whom you do not know. ²⁷He follows after me, but I am not important enough even to untie his sandals."

²⁸These events occurred at the village of Bethany over {on the east side of} the Jordan River. {That is the place} where John was baptizing people.

²⁹The day after that happened, John saw Jesus coming toward him. Then he said to the people, "Look! {He is} the Lamb of God! He will sacrifice himself to forgive the sins of the people in this world. ³⁰This man is the one about whom I said, 'Someone will come after me who is more important than I am, because {he existed long} before me.' ³¹I did not know who he was {at first}. Nevertheless, I have been baptizing people with water for the very purpose of revealing him to the people of Israel."

³²And John declared, "I saw God's Spirit coming down from heaven appearing like a dove. Then the Spirit remained on Jesus. ³³I did not know who he was {at first}, but God sent me to baptize {people} with water and told me, 'The man on whom you see my Spirit come down and remain is the man who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I have seen this, and I declare to you that this man, Jesus, is the Son of God."

³⁵The day after that happened, John the Baptizer was again with two of his students. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! {He is} the Lamb of God!" ³⁷Then John's two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned around and saw them coming behind him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi (which means 'teacher' {in Jewish Aramaic}), where are you lodging?" ³⁹He replied, "Come with me, and you will see!" So they came and saw where Jesus was lodging. They stayed with him that day because it was getting late. (It was about 4:00 PM)

⁴⁰One of those two disciples who had heard what John had said and followed Jesus was Andrew. {He was} Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹Andrew first {went and} found his brother Simon. {When he came to him,} he said, "We have found the Messiah!" (Messiah is "Christ" in the Greek language.) ⁴²Andrew took Simon to Jesus. When Jesus looked at Peter, he said, "You are Simon. Your father's name is John. {From now on} your name will {also} be Cephas." ({Cephas is an Aramaic word that is} "Peter" in Greek {and means "rock"}.)

⁴³The day after that happened Jesus decided to leave that area. He went to the region of Galilee and found a man named Philip. Jesus said to him, "Come be my disciple." ⁴⁴Philip was from the city of Bethsaida {in Galilee}. {This is also the city that} Andrew and Peter were from. ⁴⁵{Then} Philip {went and} found Nathaniel. {When he came to him,} he said, "We have found the Messiah whom Moses wrote about in the law {God gave the Israelites} and {whom} the prophets {said would come}. {The Messiah is} Jesus. His father's name is Joseph. He is from the town of Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathaniel replied, "From Nazareth? Certainly nothing good can come out of that town!" Philip replied, "Come and see for yourself!" ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching him, he said to him, "Look! {Here is} an honest Israelite! He never deceives anyone!" ⁴⁸Nathaniel asked him, "How do you know what kind of man I am?" Jesus replied, "I saw you before Philip called you, when you were sitting {by yourself} under the fig tree." ⁴⁹Then Nathaniel declared, "Teacher, you must be the Son of God! You are the King of Israel {whom we have been waiting for}!" ⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Do you trust in me just because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see me do things that are much greater than that!" ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, "I am telling you the truth: {Just like the vision your ancestor Jacob long ago saw,} you will see heaven opened up, and you will see God's angels going up and coming down on me, the Son of Man."

Chapter 2

¹Two days later, there was a wedding in Cana, which is a town in the region of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there. ²And someone also invited Jesus and his disciples to the wedding. ³{The hosts served wine to those attending the wedding and} they drank all the wine they had. {So} Jesus' mother said to him, "They are out of wine. {Please do something about it.}" ⁴Then Jesus said to her, "Madam, what does that have to do with me or you? {The chosen} time {for me to begin} my {work} has not arrived yet." ⁵Jesus' mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you to do." ⁶(There were six {empty} stone jars placed there. They held water {so that the people could wash themselves according to} Jewish religious cleansing laws. Each jar could hold 80 to 120 liters {of water}.) ⁷Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled the jars completely to the top. ⁸Then he told them, "Now, take some water out of a jar and bring it to the director of the wedding feast." So the servants did that. ⁹Then the director of the feast tasted the water, which had now become wine. (He did not know where the wine had come from,

although the servants who had taken out the water knew.) And he called the bridegroom {to himself}. ¹⁰Then he told the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the best wine first and serves the cheap wine later, when the guests have drunk a lot {and can't tell the difference}. However, you have saved the best wine until now." ¹¹That was the first of the miraculous signs that Jesus did. He did it in the town of Cana, which is in the region of Galilee. There he showed how great he is. So his disciples trusted in him.

¹²Some time after doing this miracle, Jesus and his mother and brothers, along with his disciples, went down to the town of Capernaum. And they stayed there for a few days.

¹³Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went up to the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁴There in the temple {courtyard} he saw men selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons {for those making sacrifices there}. {He also saw} men sitting at tables, exchanging money {for temple money}. ¹⁵So Jesus made a whip from some braided leather strips, and he used it to drive all those people out from the temple {along with} the sheep and the cattle. He also scattered the coins of the moneychangers on the ground and flipped their tables over. ¹⁶He told those who were selling pigeons, "Take these pigeons out of here! Do not turn my Father's house into a marketplace!" ¹⁷{This event} reminded his disciples about what someone had written {in the scriptures long before}, "I love your temple so much, {O God,} that I would die for it."

¹⁸The Jewish leaders then responded by asking Jesus, "What miracle can you do for us {to prove that you have authority from God} to do these things that you are doing?" ¹⁹Jesus replied to them, "If you destroy this temple, then in three days I will rebuild it." ²⁰So the Jewish leaders said, "It took 46 years to build this temple. {Are you saying that} you are going to rebuild this entire temple in just three days?" ²¹However, the temple Jesus was speaking about was his own body, {not the temple building}. ²²As a result {of this statement}, his disciples remembered these things that he had said after God had raised Jesus from the dead. Then they believed both what the scriptures said and what Jesus himself had said.

²³At a later time, when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, during {the days of} the celebration, many people trusted in him because they saw the miracles he kept on doing. ²⁴Nevertheless, because Jesus knew what all people were like, he did not trust them. ²⁵Jesus {also did not trust them} because he did not need anyone to tell him about mankind. {This is} because he knew what people {think and want}.

Chapter 3

¹Now there was a man named Nicodemus. He was a member of {a strict Jewish religious group called} the Pharisees. He was a member of the highest Jewish governing council. ²He visited Jesus at night. He said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. {We know this} because no one can do these miracles you are doing unless God is helping him." ³Jesus replied to Nicodemus and said, "I am telling you the truth: No one can enter where God rules without being born a second time." ⁴Then Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person be born again when he is old? No one can enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: no one can enter where God rules unless he is born again by water and the Spirit. ⁶If a human being gives birth to a person, {that person} is a human being. But those who are born {again} by the {work of God's} Spirit have a new spiritual nature {that God makes within them}. ⁷Do not be astonished because I told you that you must be born again. ⁸The Holy Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to blow. Although you can hear the sound of the wind, you do not know where the wind came from or where it is going. {Just as you do not understand these things,} so {also you do not understand} everyone who is born {again} by the {work of God's} Spirit. ⁹Nicodemus answered him, "How is this possible?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "You are an important religious teacher among the people of Israel, so you should understand what I am saying! ¹¹I am telling you the truth: my disciples and I say the things that we know are true, and we are telling you the things that we have witnessed. Yet you people {to whom we say these things} reject what we are saying. ¹²Since you people do not trust what I say when I tell you about things that happen on this earth, you certainly will not trust what I say when I tell you about things that happen in heaven! ¹³I, the Son of Man, am the only one who has gone up to

heaven, and I am the only one who has come down {to earth} from heaven. ¹⁴{Long ago, when the Israelites were wandering} in the wilderness, Moses lifted up a {bronze model of a poisonous} snake {on a pole, and all who looked up at it were saved from the snakes}. In the same way, people must lift me, the Son of Man, up {on a cross}. ¹⁵{They will lift me up} so that whoever looks up and trusts in me will live forever {with me in heaven}.

¹⁶{This is} because God loved the world's people in this way, so that he gave his Unique Son in order that anyone who trusts in his Son would not die but would live forever. ¹⁷{This is true} because God did not send me, his Son, into the world in order to declare the world's people guilty. Rather, {God sent me} in order to save the world's people by me. ¹⁸God does not declare guilty anyone who trusts in his Son. But God has already declared guilty everyone who does not trust in his Son, because they did not trust in the name of the Unique Son of God. ¹⁹Now God's judicial ruling is as follows: {the one who is} the light entered the world, but people loved evil instead of him, because they do evil deeds. ²⁰{They love the darkness} because every person who continually does evil deeds hates {the one who is} the light and will never come to him. {They avoid the light} so that the light might not reveal what they do. ²¹But the person who continually does true deeds comes to the one who is the light so that the light might show everyone what he does {and so that everyone might know} that God was helping him do these deeds."

²²After those things happened, Jesus and his disciples entered the region of Judea. He stayed there for a while with his disciples and baptized many people.

²³John the Baptizer was also baptizing people near the town of Aenon, which is near the town of Salim in the region of Samaria. {He was baptizing people there} because there was much water in that place, and people kept coming to John to be baptized. ²⁴{John could do this} because John's enemies had not yet put him in prison. ²⁵Then some of John's disciples started arguing with a Jewish man about Jewish religious cleansing laws. ²⁶Those who were arguing came to John and said, "Teacher, there was a man who was with you when you were baptizing people on the other side of the Jordan River. You had testified about who he was. Look! Now he is baptizing people, and many people are going out to him!" ²⁷John answered, "Nobody can receive anything unless God gives it to him. ²⁸You are surely witnesses to me saying that I am not the Messiah, but I am the one whom God has sent before the Messiah. ²⁹The bride belongs to the bridegroom. I am like the friend of the bridegroom. I stand and listen to him and am very happy because I hear the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, {because the bride is going to the bridegroom}, I am extremely joyful. ³⁰{Jesus, the bridegroom,} must become more influential, and I, {the bridegroom's friend,} must become less influential.

³¹Jesus comes from heaven, and he is greater than everyone and everything. Those {like myself} who are from the earth can only speak {with the limited perspective of someone} from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is greater than everyone and everything on the earth. ³²Jesus tells people about the things he has seen and heard {in heaven}, but very few people accept what he says. ³³{However,} whoever believes what Jesus says has verified that God is truthful. ³⁴{This is} because this Jesus whom God has sent says God's words. {We know he says God's words} because God surely gives his Spirit to him without limit. ³⁵God the Father loves the Son and has given him authority over everything. ³⁶Whoever trusts in God's Son will live forever {with him in heaven}. Whoever does not obey the Son of God will never have eternal life. Rather, God will continually be furious with him."

Chapter 4

¹Later, {the religious group called} the Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining more disciples than John the Baptizer and that he was baptizing more people than John was baptizing. Jesus also found out that the Pharisees had heard this. ²{Jesus did not actually baptize anyone, but his disciples were baptizing people.} ³{When he found out that the Pharisees were aware of him,} Jesus left the region of Judea and returned once more to the region of Galilee. ⁴Now {to get to the region of Galilee} he had to go through the region of Samaria. ⁵Next, they arrived at a city named Sychar in the region of Samaria. Sychar was near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph {a long time ago}. ⁶{Jacob's well was in that area.} After {arriving at Sychar} Jesus was very tired because of his long journey, so he sat down {to rest} next to Jacob's well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came out {to

the well} {to lower a bucket on a rope} to pull up some water. Jesus said to her, "Please give me some water to drink." ⁸{He said this} because his disciples had left {him by himself} and had gone into the city in order to buy food. ⁹And the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "I am surprised that you, a Jew, are asking me, a woman from Samaria, for a drink." ({She said this} because Jews usually would not have anything to do with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus replied to her, "If you had known the gift that God wants to give you, and if you had known who I am who is requesting a drink from you, you would have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman replied, "Sir, you do not have a bucket {with which to draw the water up out of the well,} and this well is deep. {Since you can't get the water out of this well,} where did you get this living water from? ¹²You are surely not greater than our father Jacob. He {dug this well} and gave it to us. He, his sons, and his livestock drank water from it as well." ¹³Jesus replied to her, "Everyone who drinks water from this well will become thirsty again. ¹⁴But anyone who drinks the water that I will give him will never become thirsty again. Rather, the water that I will give him will become a spring of water inside him {that fills him up} and causes him to live forever {in heaven}." ¹⁵The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, please give me some of this water in order that I may never become thirsty again or have to come to this well to draw water again."

¹⁶Jesus told her, "Go get your husband and bring him here." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus told her, "You are right in saying that you have no husband, ¹⁸because you have had not one, but five, husbands, and the man you are currently {living with} is not your husband. What you have said {about not having a husband} is true."

¹⁹The woman said to Jesus, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped God right here on this mountain, but you Jews say that we must worship God at {your temple} in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus told her, "Madam, believe me when I say that a time is coming when neither here on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You people {here in Samaria} worship the God whom you do not know. We Jews worship the God whom we know. {This is true} because the way to be saved {from your sins} comes from among the Jews. ²³Nevertheless, the time is coming and has now arrived when those who truly worship God will worship the Father spiritually and truthfully. {This is} because the Father indeed searches for such people to worship him. ²⁴God is a spiritual being, and those who worship him must worship him spiritually and truthfully." ²⁵The woman said to Jesus, "I know that the Messiah will come. (He is the one called "Christ" in Greek.) When he comes, he will tell us everything {that we need to know}." ²⁶Jesus told her, "I, who am speaking to you now, I am the Messiah!"

²⁷Just at that moment, his disciples came back from the city. They were astonished because Jesus was talking {alone} with a woman {whom he didn't know}. However, no one dared to ask him, "What do you want from her?" or "Why are you talking with her at all?"

²⁸At that time the woman left her water jar there and returned to the city. She said to the men of the city, ²⁹"Come and meet this man who told me so many things that I have done! He could not be the Messiah, could he?" ³⁰Those men left the city and came to Jesus.

³¹{While the woman was gone,} Jesus' disciples, {who had just returned with the food,} pleaded with him to eat. They said, "Teacher, please eat something!" ³²Jesus told them, "I have sustenance that you know nothing about!"

³³So they were saying to one another, "Surely no one else could have brought him something to eat, could they?"

³⁴Jesus told them, "This is what sustains me: It is to do what my Father—who sent me—wants and to complete my Father's work. ³⁵{At this time of the year} you usually say, 'There are four months left, and then we will harvest the crops.' Listen to what I'm telling you. Look and see that these people are like fields that are now ready for harvest!

³⁶The one who harvests these crops receives payment and collects fruit, which is people receiving life forever {in heaven}. The result is that those who sow the seed and those who reap the harvest will be glad together. ³⁷What I'm going to say is true: One person sows the seeds, and another person harvests the crops. ³⁸I sent you disciples of mine to gather the harvest from a crop that you did not plant. Others have worked very hard {to plant the crop}, but you are now joining them in their work."

³⁹Now many Samaritans who lived in the city of Sychar trusted in Jesus because of what the woman had told them. She said, "He told me so many things that I have done." ⁴⁰When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to remain with them. So he stayed there with them for two more days. ⁴¹Many more of them trusted in Jesus because of what he proclaimed to them. ⁴²The townspeople told the woman, "We believe in Jesus now, but not just because of what you told us about him. {We believe} because we have heard his message for ourselves. Now we know that this man truly is the one who saves the believers in the world {from their sins}."

⁴³After he stayed for two days {with the Samaritans}, Jesus left the city of Sychar and entered the region of Galilee.

⁴⁴{Jesus wanted to go to Galilee because he himself confirmed that a prophet does not receive honor in the place where he grew up {and he did not want publicity}.} ⁴⁵Since this is true, when he arrived in the region of Galilee many of the people there merely welcomed him because they had seen all the amazing things he had done in Jerusalem during the recent Passover celebration, which they also had gone to. ⁴⁶Next, Jesus went back again to the town of Cana in the region of Galilee. {That was} where he had turned water into wine. There was an official of the king who lived nearby in the city of Capernaum and had a son who was very sick. ⁴⁷When that official heard that Jesus had come back to Galilee from Judea, he went to Jesus in Cana and asked him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son, because his son would die soon. ⁴⁸Jesus then told him, "You people will only trust in me {as the Messiah} if you see {me perform} wonderful miracles!" ⁴⁹The official of the king said to him, "Sir, please come down to my home in Capernaum before my son dies!" ⁵⁰Jesus told him, "Go home. Your son will live." The man trusted what Jesus told him, and he started to go back home. ⁵¹As the official was traveling down to his home in the city of Capernaum, his servants met him {along the road}. They told him, "Your child is going to live." ⁵²He asked his servants, "At what time did my son start getting better?" They answered him, "At 1:00 PM yesterday his fever went away." ⁵³And the boy's father recognized that his son had recovered at the exact time that Jesus had told him that his son would live. So this same man, along with everyone who lived in his house, trusted in Jesus.

⁵⁴That was the second great miracle that Jesus did. {He did it during the time that} he came to the region of Galilee after leaving the region of Judea.

Chapter 5

¹After those things happened, the time came for another Jewish festival, and Jesus walked up to the city of Jerusalem {to celebrate the festival}. ²{There is a place} called the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, {which is one of the gates going into the city}. There is a pool beside that gate which people called Bethesda in the language used by the Jews. Next to the pool are five porches with roofs. ³Many people were lying on these porches. They were people who were ill, unable to see, unable to walk, or unable to move. ⁴^[1] [[They were lying there} because an angel from the Lord would occasionally come down and aggrivate the water. Whoever was the first person to step into the water after the angel aggravated it was healed from whatever illness or infirmity that was afflicting him.] ⁵There was a man lying near this pool called Bethesda who had been sick for 38 years. ⁶Jesus saw this man lying near the pool, and he knew that he had been lying there for a long time. He asked the man, "Do you want your health to get better?" ⁷The ill man answered him, "Sir, I don't have anyone who can put me into the pool when an angel stirs the water. By the time I can put myself into the pool, someone else has already gone down into the pool {and been healed} before me, {so that I cannot be healed}." ⁸Jesus told him, "Stand up! Pick up the mat {that you have been lying on} and walk!" ⁹Then Jesus healed the man at once, and the man picked up the mat {that he had been lying on} and walked.

{Now this happened on {the Jewish day for rest known as} the Sabbath. ¹⁰Because {it was the Jewish day for rest}, the Jewish leaders said to the man whom Jesus had healed, "Today is a day for rest. You are not allowed to carry your mat {on this day, because it is work}." ¹¹The man whom Jesus had healed answered them, "The man who healed me told me to pick up the mat {that I had been lying on} and walk.'" ¹²The Jewish leaders asked him, "Who told you to pick up your mat and walk?" ¹³However, the man whom Jesus had healed did not know who had healed him, because Jesus had left the man without being noticed, since that area was crowded.

¹⁴Later, Jesus found the man whom he had healed in the temple and told him, "Look, you are well now! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse {than your previous illness} might happen to you." ¹⁵That man went away and told the Jewish leaders that the man who had healed him was Jesus. ¹⁶So the Jewish leaders started persecuting Jesus because he was miraculously healing people on the Jewish day for rest. ¹⁷Jesus gave this answer to them, "God, my Father, is working today, so I am also working." ¹⁸As a consequence {of him saying this}, the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus even more {than they had tried before}. {They wanted to kill him} because he was not only disobeying their rules for the day for rest but also because he was claiming that he was equal with God by saying that God was his own Father.

¹⁹Because of {these accusations} Jesus replied to the Jewish leaders, "I am telling you {people} the truth: I, the Son, can do nothing on my own authority. I can only do what I perceive that God, the Father, is doing. Whatever the Father does, I, the Son, also do. ²⁰{This is true} because the Father loves me, the Son, and makes known to me everything that he is doing. The Father will also make known to me miraculous deeds that will be even greater than the miracles {that I have already done} in order that you might be astonished by them. ²¹{This will happen} because I, the Son, give eternal life to anyone I want in the same way that the Father resurrects those who have died and gives them life again. ²²{This is true} because the Father does not judge anyone. Rather, he has given all authority to judge people to me, the Son. ²³{The Father did this} in order that everyone would honor me, the Son, in the same way that they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor me cannot honor my Father, who sent me. ²⁴I am telling you people the truth: Anyone who accepts and obeys my teachings and trusts God who sent me lives forever {with me in heaven}, and God does not judge him as guilty. Instead, that person has gone from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive.

²⁵I am telling you people the truth: A time is coming and, in fact, is here already when those who have died will hear my voice, the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear me will live. ²⁶{This is true} because as the Father is able to make people alive, in the same way he has also given me, the Son, the ability to make people alive. ²⁷The Father has authorized me to judge all mankind, because I am the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not be surprised {that the Father has done} this, because there will be a time when everyone who has died will hear my voice. ²⁹Then they will come out of their graves. God will raise up those who have done good to give them eternal life. But God will raise up those who have done evil to condemn and punish them forever. ³⁰I can do nothing on my own. I judge according to what I hear {from the Father}, and I judge in a just manner. {I judge justly} because I do not try to do what I want. Rather, I do what my Father, who has sent me, wants.

³¹If I alone were the only one to be a witness about myself, {according to the law of Moses} my witness would not be trustworthy. ³²Nevertheless, there is someone else who testifies about me, and I know that what he testifies about me is trustworthy. ³³You Jewish leaders sent messengers to John the Baptizer, and he told you the truth about me. ³⁴However, I do not need anyone to be a witness for me. Nevertheless, I am saying this about John the Baptizer in order that God might save you. ³⁵John the Baptizer {proclaimed God's truth to you} like a burning and shining lamp. You were willing to rejoice for a while in the light {that was the truth that he proclaimed}. ³⁶However, the witness that I give about myself is even greater than the witness John gave about me. {This is} because this witness is the miraculous works that God the Father has allowed me to do. These very works that I am doing are proof that the Father has sent me. ³⁷Furthermore, my Father who sent me is the very one who has given testimony about me. None of you have ever heard him speak or seen what he looks like. ³⁸You also do not obey the Father's teachings. {I know this is true} because you do not trust me, the very person he has sent! ³⁹You carefully study the Scriptures because you believe that by studying them you will be able to live forever {in heaven}. It is those very Scriptures that declare who I am. ⁴⁰Yet still you refuse to be my disciples in order that you might live {forever in heaven}.

⁴¹I do not accept honor from anyone. ⁴²However, I know that you do not love God at all. ⁴³I have come with my Father's authority, but still you do not accept me. If someone else were to come with his own authority, you would accept him. ⁴⁴You cannot possibly trust in me when you are honoring each other instead of desiring the one and only God to honor you!

⁴⁵Do not think that I am the one who will accuse you before my Father. Moses, the very person you have hoped would defend you, is actually the person who will accuse you. ⁴⁶{He will accuse you} because if you had trusted Moses, but you do not, then you would trust me, because Moses explained about me {in the law}. ⁴⁷Since you do not even trust what Moses wrote, you cannot possibly trust what I have said to you!"

5:4 ^[1]

Chapter 6

¹After those things happened, Jesus crossed over to the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee, which some people also call the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd followed him because they had seen the miraculous signs he was performing, that is, healing people who were very ill. ³Jesus walked up on a steep hillside and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴(Now at that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place.) ⁵Jesus then looked up and saw a very large crowd of people walking toward him. He asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread in order to feed all these people?" ⁶(He asked Philip this question in order to test his faith, because Jesus already knew what he was going to do about the problem.) ⁷Philip replied to him, "If we had the money that a man can earn in 200 days of work, it would not be enough money to buy bread to give each person in this crowd even a little piece to eat." ⁸Another disciple of his, Simon Peter's brother Andrew, told Jesus, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five little loaves of barley bread and two small fish. Yet, these few loaves and fish are certainly not enough to feed all these people!" ¹⁰Jesus told his disciples to make the people sit down. Thus about 5,000 men sat down. (There was a lot of grass in that place {for them to sit down on}.) ¹¹Jesus then took the little loaves of barley bread, and he thanked God for the food. {Then} he {and his disciples} gave the loaves to the people who were sitting {on the grass} in order to eat. He did the same with the two fish. The people ate all the fish and bread that they wanted to eat. ¹²When everyone had eaten until they were full, Jesus told his disciples to collect all the leftover, uneaten pieces of barley bread in order that none of it would be wasted. ¹³Thus his disciples collected the pieces, and they filled 12 large baskets with the broken pieces that the people had left over from the five little loaves of barley bread.

¹⁴Because {of this}, when the people saw this miraculous sign that Jesus had performed {in front of them}, they said, "Surely he is the Prophet whom {God promised} to send into the world!" ¹⁵When Jesus knew that the people were planning to grab him in order to force him to be their king, he left them again and went up the hillside to be completely alone.

¹⁶When it was evening, Jesus' disciples walked down the hillside to the Sea of Galilee. ¹⁷{They} got into a boat and started to sail across the sea to the town of Capernaum. (It had already become dark, and Jesus had still not joined them.) ¹⁸Because the wind was blowing strongly, it was causing the sea to be very turbulent. ¹⁹After Jesus' disciples had rowed the boat around four-and-a-half or five-and-a-half kilometers out into the sea, they saw Jesus walking on the water and approaching the boat. They were terrified! ²⁰Jesus told them, "It is I, Jesus! Stop being afraid!" ²¹They were very glad to take him into the boat. As soon as he was with them in the boat, their boat arrived at the place where they were going.

²²The day after Jesus had fed the crowd, the crowd of people that had stayed on the other side of the sea realized that there had been only one boat there {the day before}. {They also knew} that Jesus had not gone in the boat with his disciples. ²³(People came from the city of Tiberias in other boats. {They put their boats} near the place where the crowd had eaten the bread after the Lord Jesus had thanked God for it.) ²⁴So when the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and sailed to the city of Capernaum to look for Jesus.

²⁵The crowd found Jesus in Capernaum on the side of the Sea of Galilee that is opposite {from where he had fed them}. They asked him, "Teacher, {we know you didn't come in a boat,} so when did you arrive here at Capernaum?" ²⁶Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs that I performed. Rather, {you are looking for me} only because you ate until you were full of the loaves of bread that I gave you. ²⁷Stop working for food that will soon spoil! Instead, work for the food that will bring you life forever {in

heaven)! {That food} is the bread that I, the Son of Man, will give you. {I alone can give it to you} because God my Father approves of me."

²⁸Then the crowd asked Jesus, "What works should we do in order to please God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "The work that God wants you to do is this: Trust in me, the one whom he has sent." ³⁰The crowd asked him, "Then what miracle will you do in order for us to see it and trust in you? What will you do for us?" ³¹Our ancestors ate manna {when they wandered} in the wilderness {with Moses}, just as the prophets wrote: 'God gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"

³²Jesus answered them, "I am telling you the truth: It was not Moses who gave your ancestors that bread from heaven. No, it was my Father, who is now giving you the true bread out of heaven. ³³{This is true} because the true bread from God has come down from heaven and gives eternal life to the people in the world."

³⁴{The crowd did not understand what he meant}, so they said to Jesus, "Sir, please give this bread to us all the time." ³⁵Jesus told the crowd, "{Like food sustains physical life}, I am the bread that gives eternal life. {Unlike with food or drink}, anyone who trusts in me will surely be satisfied forever. ³⁶Nevertheless, I have already told you that even though you see me, you still do not trust me. ³⁷All the people my Father gives to me will come {and be my disciples}, and I will surely never drive away any of them. ³⁸{I will never do that} because I have not come down from heaven in order to do what I want. Rather, {I have come down} in order to do what my Father, who sent me, wants me to do. ³⁹This is what my Father, who sent me, wants: {He wants me} to keep all of those whom he has given to me. {He also wants} me to make these ones alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. ⁴⁰{This is true} because this is also what my Father wants: {He wants} everyone who recognizes who I, the Son, am, and trusts in me to live forever {with me in heaven}. I will make these ones alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}."

⁴¹The Jewish leaders then started to grumble about Jesus, because he had said that he was the true bread that had come down out of heaven. ⁴²They said, "This is just Jesus, Joseph's son! We know who his parents are. He cannot possibly have come down out of heaven as he claims!" ⁴³Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves {about what I just said}. ⁴⁴Only those whom my Father, who sent me, causes to come {and be my disciples} are able to do so. I myself will make those people {who come to me} alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. ⁴⁵The prophets wrote that God will teach everyone. Everyone who listens to and learns from my Father will come {and be my disciples}. ⁴⁶No one has seen God my Father other than me. I am the one who came from God. I alone have seen him. ⁴⁷I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will live forever {with me in heaven}. ⁴⁸I am the true bread that gives eternal life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate manna {when they wandered} in the wilderness {with Moses}, but they still died. ⁵⁰{But} this bread that I am talking about came down out of heaven in order that someone would eat it and that person's spirit would never die. ⁵¹I truly am this bread that gives eternal life and came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever {with me in heaven}. My body is also this bread. I will give up my body for the sake of the eternal life of everyone in the world."

⁵²The Jewish leaders then started arguing with each other. They said, "This man surely cannot give his body to us in order for us to eat it!" ⁵³So Jesus told them: "I am telling you the truth: You must eat the flesh of me, the Son of Man, and drink my blood. {If you do not do these things, then} you will never have eternal life. ⁵⁴Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live forever {with me in heaven}. I will also make that person alive again on the last day {when I judge everyone}. ⁵⁵{This is so} because my flesh is true spiritual food, and my blood is true {spiritual} drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will be united with me, and I will be united with them. ⁵⁷My Father makes everyone alive. He has sent me here, and I can make people alive because he has enabled me to do so. In the same way, those who feed on me will live forever because of what I will do for them. ⁵⁸I am this bread that has come down out of heaven. {This bread is} not like {the bread that} the Israelite ancestors ate {in the wilderness} but still eventually died. Anyone who eats me—this bread—will live forever {with me in heaven}." ⁵⁹Jesus said these statements {to the Jewish leaders} in a synagogue while he was teaching in the city of Capernaum.

⁶⁰After they heard {what he had said}, many of Jesus' disciples said, "What he is teaching is difficult to accept. Indeed, no one can accept it!" ⁶¹{Although no one told} him, Jesus knew that his disciples were grumbling about what he had said. {So} he asked them, "Did my teaching offend you?" ⁶²{If this teaching has offended you,} then {would you also be offended} if you saw me, the Son of Man, ascending to heaven where I was formerly? ⁶³The Holy Spirit is the only one who can give anyone eternal life. Human nature is useless in this matter. What I have taught you comes from the Holy Spirit and gives eternal life. ⁶⁴Nevertheless, some of you do not believe what I have said." (Jesus said this because he knew since he began his work who would not believe him and who would eventually betray him.)

⁶⁵Then Jesus said, "Because {some of you do not believe me}, I told you earlier that only those to whom God the Father has given the ability to come {and be my disciple} will be able to do so."

⁶⁶After Jesus said these things, a lot of his disciples went back {to doing what they had been doing before they met him} and stopped being his disciples. ⁶⁷Because {so many left him}, Jesus asked his twelve disciples, "Surely you do not also want to leave me, do you?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter replied, "Lord, {if we were to leave you}, there is no one else we could go to! Only you teach the message {that allows us} to live forever {in heaven}!" ⁶⁹We trust in you, and we know for certain that you are the Holy One who has come from God!" ⁷⁰Jesus answered them, "I surely chose all you twelve men, but one of you is under the control of Satan!" ⁷¹{When Jesus said this} he was talking about Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, because he was the one among the twelve disciples who would later betray Jesus.)

Chapter 7

¹After those things happened, Jesus walked around in the region of Galilee because he did not want to walk around in the region of Judea. {He avoided Judea} because the Jewish leaders there were trying to find a way to kill him. ²(Now at that time the Jewish Shelters celebration was about to take place.) ³Jesus' brothers told him, "Leave here and go to the region of Judea in order that your disciples can also observe you doing miraculous works. ⁴{Do your miraculous works in Judea} because no one who wants to be famous does anything secretly. Since you are doing all these miracles, reveal who you {claim to be} to everyone {by doing miraculous works}!" ⁵{Jesus' brothers said this} because not even they believed he was the Messiah. ⁶Because {they did not believe in him,} Jesus told them, "This is not the right time for me {to go to Jerusalem}, but you can go there whenever you want. ⁷No one in the world can hate you. However, everyone hates me because I declare that they do evil deeds. ⁸You go {to Jerusalem} for the celebration. I am not going to the celebration yet, because now is not the right time for me to go." ⁹After saying that to his brothers, Jesus stayed a little longer in the region of Galilee.

¹⁰However, a few days after his brothers left for the festival, he also went, but he did so secretly. ¹¹Because the Jewish leaders {expected Jesus to be} at the celebration, they tried to find him. They asked people, "Where is that man?" ¹²The crowds were quietly speaking a lot about Jesus. Some people said, "He is a good man!" But others said, "No! He deceives the crowd!" ¹³Nevertheless, the people were afraid of the Jewish leaders, so they didn't speak about Jesus in public.

¹⁴About halfway through the Shelters celebration, Jesus entered the temple {courtyard} and started teaching the people there. ¹⁵The Jewish leaders were shocked {at his teaching}. They said, "This man has not received religious training. He cannot possibly know the scriptures so well!" ¹⁶Jesus replied to them, "What I teach does not come from myself. On the contrary, it comes from God, who sent me. ¹⁷If anyone wants to do what God wants, then that person will know that what I am teaching has come from God and not only by my own authority. ¹⁸Anyone who speaks on his own authority only wants to glorify himself. However, anyone who wants to glorify the person who sent him speaks the truth and acts righteously. ¹⁹Moses did indeed give you laws {from God}. None of you completely obeys those laws. {Since that is true,} why are you trying to kill me {for supposedly disobeying those same laws that you don't obey}?"

²⁰Some people in the crowd replied, "A demon is controlling you! No one is trying to kill you!" ²¹Jesus replied to the crowd, "{Because} I did one miraculous healing on the day for rest, all of you are shocked. ²²Because {some works like healing would occur on the day for rest}, Moses gave you a law about circumcision. {That law states that you must circumcise your sons exactly seven days after they are born.} ({Circumcision} did not actually begin with Moses, but {this rite} began with your forefathers, {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob}.) {Because of that law,} sometimes you must work on the day for rest by circumcising your male babies. ²³Since you sometimes circumcise someone on the day for rest in order to avoid disobeying the law of Moses, you shouldn't be angry with me for {doing a good work like} healing someone on that day! ²⁴Stop judging me according to what you have seen! Rather, judge me according to what God says is right."

²⁵Some of the people in the crowd who dwelled in Jerusalem then said, "This is the man that our leaders are trying to kill! ²⁶Look! He is saying these things publicly, but our leaders are not saying anything to oppose him. Can it be that our leaders really know that he is the Messiah? ²⁷But {this man cannot be the Messiah!} We know where this man came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

²⁸Jesus then spoke loudly while he was teaching in the temple {courtyard}. He said, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I have come from. But I have not come here on my own authority. Rather, the one who sent me is the real God, and you do not know him. ²⁹I know him because I have come from him. He is the one who sent me."

³⁰Because {Jesus said these things}, the Jewish leaders wanted to arrest him, but no one could seize him, because it was not yet the right time for him {to die}. ³¹In contrast {to the Jewish leaders}, many in the crowd of people trusted in Jesus. They kept saying, "When the Messiah comes, he surely will not be able to do more miraculous signs than this man!" ³²Some of the Pharisees overheard them quietly speaking these things about Jesus. Then they and the ruling priests sent temple guards to arrest him.

³³Because {they did this}, Jesus said, "I will only be with you for a little while longer. Soon I will go back to God, who sent me. ³⁴You will search for me, but you will not find me. You will not be able to come to the place where I will be." ³⁵So the Jewish leaders said to each other, "Where can this man go where we cannot find him? Will he actually go to those Jews who are spread throughout the world outside of Israel? Will he even teach the people there who aren't Jews? ³⁶What did he mean when he said that we will search for him, but we will not find him, and we will not be able to come to the place where he will be?"

³⁷Now on the final and most important day of the {Shelters} celebration, Jesus stood up {in the temple courtyard} and spoke loudly. He said, "Anyone who is thirsty should come to me and drink {what I will give them}! ³⁸This is what the prophets wrote in the scripture about anyone who trusts in me: 'Water that gives eternal life will abundantly flow from that person's innermost being.'" ³⁹(Now Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit, whom God was going to give to those who trusted in Jesus. {He said this} because {at that time God had not yet sent} the Holy Spirit {to dwell within those who trusted in him}, because Jesus had not yet received honor {by his death, resurrection, and return to heaven}).)

⁴⁰After some people among the crowd heard what Jesus had said, they said, "He is truly the Prophet {whom God had said would come}!" ⁴¹Some other people in the crowd said, "He is the Messiah!" However, others {who mistakenly thought that Jesus was born in Galilee,} said, "But the Messiah cannot possibly come from the region of Galilee. ⁴²The prophets wrote in the scriptures that the Messiah must come from the descendants of King David and {that he must come} from the village of Bethlehem, where David came from!" ⁴³Thus the people in the crowd divided {into opposing groups} on account of Jesus. ⁴⁴(Some of the people in the crowd wanted to arrest him. However, no one seized him.)

⁴⁵The temple guards then returned to the ruling priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him and bring him here?" ⁴⁶The temple guards replied, "No one has ever spoken like this man has!" ⁴⁷Because {the guards said that,} the Pharisees replied by asking, "Can it be that he has deceived you as well? ⁴⁸Surely, none of the members of our highest governing council or us Pharisees have trusted in him! ⁴⁹However, this crowd of people does not know God's laws, and God has cursed them!"

⁵⁰Then Nicodemus spoke. (He was the man who had come to Jesus {at night to speak with him} in the past. {He had done this} even though he was one of the Pharisees, {which was a group that usually opposed Jesus}.) He told the Jewish religious leaders, ⁵¹“Our Jewish laws surely do not allow us to condemn someone without first listening to him and learning about what he has done.” ⁵²They replied to him insultingly, “Surely, you are not from the region of Galilee as well! Are you? Read through the scriptures carefully! {If you do that,} you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee.”

⁵³^[1] [Then they all left and went to their own homes.

7:53 ^[1]

Chapter 8

¹^[1] Jesus went to the Mount of Olives {and stayed near there that night}. ²At dawn the next morning, Jesus returned to the temple {courtyard} and many people came to him. ³Some of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman to him. They had apprehended her while she was committing adultery. They made her stand up in the midst of this group. ⁴The priests wanted to test Jesus in order to be able to accuse him {of breaking the law of Moses before the highest Jewish governing council}. So they said to him, “Teacher, we apprehended this woman while she was committing adultery, the very act itself! ⁵Now Moses commanded us in the law that we must kill such women with stones. Nevertheless, what do you say we should do?” ⁶However, Jesus bent down and wrote something on the ground with his finger. ⁷While they continued to question him, he got up and told them, “Let the one among you who has never sinned throw the first stone at her {and lead the rest to kill her}!” ⁸Then Jesus stooped down again and wrote something on the ground with his finger. ⁹{After he did this,} those Jewish leaders {who were questioning him} started walking away, one by one. The older ones left first and then the younger ones. Then only Jesus was there with the woman in the midst of the people. ¹⁰Jesus stood up and asked her, “Where are the men {who were accusing you}? Has no one condemned you {to be punished}?” ¹¹The woman replied, “There is no one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “I do not condemn you {to be punished} either. Leave, and from now on do not sin like this anymore!”]

¹²Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, “I am the one who gives God’s good and true light to the people in the world. Anyone who becomes my disciple will never walk in {sinful} darkness {again}. Rather, that person will have God’s good and true light that gives eternal life. ¹³The Pharisees then told him, “You are the only witness for yourself! {Since the law of Moses requires at least two witnesses,} what you say cannot be true!” ¹⁴Jesus replied, “Even if I were the only witness for myself, what I say is still true because I know where I came from and {I know} where I am going. Nevertheless, you do not know where I came from and {you do not know} where I am going. ¹⁵You judge people according to human standards. {However,} I have not come to judge anyone {in that manner}. ¹⁶Even when I do judge people, I will judge them according to the true standard, because I do not judge people on my own. Rather, I and my Father who sent me, {will judge people together}. ¹⁷Moses even wrote in your law that when at least two witnesses say the same thing, then what they say is true. ¹⁸I am my own witness, but my Father who sent me is also a witness for me. {Therefore, what I say is true}.”

¹⁹Because {Jesus said his father was a witness for him,} the Pharisees asked him, “Where is your father?” Jesus replied, “You do not know me, and you do not know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father, {but you do not}.” ²⁰He said these things about himself while he was teaching in the temple {courtyard}. {He said them} at the place {in the temple courtyard} where people brought money offerings. Nobody apprehended him, because it was not yet the right time for him to die.

²¹Jesus then told the people again, “I am going away, and you will search for me, but since you sinfully reject me, you will die without God forgiving you. You will not be able to come to the place where I am going.” ²²The Jewish leaders then said {among themselves}, “Perhaps he plans to kill himself, and that is {what he means} when he says that we will not be able to come to the place where he is going.” ²³Jesus told them, “You are from this earth below, but I am from heaven above. You belong to this sinful world. I do not belong to this world. ²⁴Because of this I told

you that you will die without God forgiving you for all the sins that you have committed. This will certainly happen unless you trust that I am {God, as I say I am}."

²⁵Because {he said that}, they asked him, "Who are you?" Jesus replied, "That is what I have been telling you ever since the beginning! ²⁶I could say many things about you and judge you, {but I won't do those things at this time}. Rather, I will tell the people in the world only what I have heard from the one who sent me. He always says the truth."

²⁷{They did not understand that Jesus was telling them about his Father {in heaven}.} ²⁸So Jesus told them, "When you have lifted me up to kill me, the Son of Man, you will know that I am {God}, and {you will know} that I do not do anything on my own authority. Rather, I only say what my Father has taught me to say. ²⁹My Father, who sent me, is always with me. He has never abandoned me, because I always do only the things that delight him." ³⁰While Jesus was saying these things, many more people believed that he was the Messiah.

³¹Jesus then told the Jews who now believed that he was the Messiah, "If you obey what I teach you, then you are my genuine disciples. ³²{Furthermore,} you will know God's truth, and {believing that} truth will free you {from what has enslaved you}." ³³They answered him, "We are the descendants of Abraham. We have never been anyone's slaves! Why do you say that we need to be free? ³⁴Jesus replied, "I am telling you the truth: Anyone who sins {is controlled by his sinful desires like} a slave {is controlled by his master}. ³⁵Slaves do not remain as {members of their master's} family forever, {but may be freed or sold}. {However,} a son is a member of the family forever. ³⁶So if the Son frees you {from being slaves to sin}, you will absolutely be able to refrain {from sinning}. ³⁷I know that you are Abraham's physical descendants. However, you are trying to kill me because you refuse to trust what I say. ³⁸I am telling you about the things that my Father has shown me. Therefore, {I say that} you do what your father has told you to do."

³⁹They replied to him, "Abraham is our ancestor." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's descendants, you would be doing the same things he did. ⁴⁰I have been telling you the true things that God told me, but you are trying to kill me. Abraham did not do something like that. ⁴¹You are doing the same things that your real father did." They told him, "We are not illegitimate children, {like you are}! We have only one Father, and that is God." ⁴²Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, which he is not, you would love me because I came from him and have come to this world. {This is true} because I did not come on my own authority. Rather, I came because God sent me. ⁴³Do you know why you do not understand what I say? It is because you do not accept {and obey} what I have told you! ⁴⁴You belong to your father, the devil, and you desire to do what he desires. He has been murdering people since the time people first {sinned}. He has rejected what is true, because he never speaks those true things. Whenever he lies, he is doing what is natural for him to do, because he is a liar. He is even the origin of lying. ⁴⁵Yet you do not believe me, because I tell you what is true! ⁴⁶{Since I have never sinned,} none of you can prove that I have. Since I tell you what is true, there is no good reason for you to not believe what I say! ⁴⁷Those who belong to God accept {and obey} what he has said. Since {this is true,} you do not accept {and obey} what God has said, because you do not belong to God."

⁴⁸The Jews opposing Jesus replied to him, "We are certainly correct when we say that you are one of the Samaritans, {whom we hate,} and that a demon is controlling you!" ⁴⁹Jesus replied, "A demon is not controlling me! On the contrary, I honor my Father {in heaven}, and you dishonor me! ⁵⁰I do not desire to persuade people to praise me. There is someone else who desires to do that and judges {whether you or I am telling the truth}. ⁵¹I am telling you the truth: Anyone who obeys my teaching will surely never die!"

⁵²The Jews opposing Jesus said to him, "Now we are sure that a demon is controlling you! Abraham and the prophets died long ago! Yet you say that anyone who obeys your teaching will surely never die! ⁵³You are surely not greater than our ancestor Abraham! He died and all the prophets also died. {So} who do you think you are?" ⁵⁴Jesus replied, "If I persuade people to praise me, that praise would be worthless. My Father is the one who praises me. He is the one whom you say is your God. ⁵⁵Although you do not know God, I do know him. If I said that I did not know him, I would be a liar like each of you. In contrast to you, I know him, and I always obey what he says. ⁵⁶Your

ancestor Abraham was overjoyed {to think} that he could see me come to the world. {God allowed him} to see me come, and he was happy."

⁵⁷Because {Jesus said this}, the Jews opposing him told him, "{Abraham died a long time ago, and} you are not even fifty years old! How can you have seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸Jesus told them, "I am telling you the truth: I was {God} before Abraham was born!" ⁵⁹Because {he was claiming to be God,} the Jews opposing Jesus picked up rocks to throw at him {to kill him}. But Jesus hid {in the crowd} and left the temple {courtyard}.

8:1 ^[1]

Chapter 9

¹While Jesus was walking along the path, he saw a man who had been blind since the day he was born. ²His disciples asked him, "Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be blind when he was born? Did this man or his parents sin?" ³Jesus replied, "It was neither the sin of this man nor the sin of his parents {that caused him to be blind when he was born}. Rather, {he was blind when he was born} so that I might show people the miraculous works God will do in him. ⁴While I am still with you, we must do the miraculous works that my Father who sent me wants us to do. Just like day is followed by night, when people cannot work, a time will come when it is too late for us to do what God wants us to do. ⁵While I am still living in this world, I am the one who gives God's good and true light to the people in the world."

⁶When he said this, he spat on the dirt and made mud by mixing his saliva {with the dirt}. Then he spread that mud on the blind man's eyes. ⁷Then Jesus said to the blind man, "Go and wash {the mud off} in the pool of Siloam!" ('Siloam' means 'sent' {in Aramaic}). So the man left and washed {the mud off in that pool}. Then he went {home} when he was able to see. ⁸The man's neighbors and others who had seen him in the past and knew that he was a beggar said, "This is surely the man who used to sit here and beg!" ⁹Some people said, "Yes, he is that man." Other people said, "No, but he just looks like that man." However, the man himself said, "Yes, I am the man who was blind!" ¹⁰So they asked him, "How is it that you can see now?" ¹¹He replied, "The man people call Jesus made mud {with dirt and his saliva} and spread it on my eyes. Then he told me to go to the pool of Siloam and wash {the mud off}. So I went there and washed {the mud off}. Then I was able to see {for the first time}." ¹²They asked him, "Where is that man?" He replied, "I do not know where he is."

¹³{Some of the people there} took the man who used to be blind to some of the Pharisees. ¹⁴{Now the day when Jesus made the mud {with his saliva} and enabled the man to see was the Jewish day for rest.) ¹⁵Then the Pharisees questioned the man for a second time. {This time} as well, they asked him about how he was now able to see. He told them, "The man placed mud on my eyes, and I washed {it off}, and now I {am able to} see {for the first time}." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees then said, "{We know that} this man has not come from God, because he does not follow the rules for the Jewish day for rest." Some other Pharisees said, "Surely a sinful man could not do the kinds of miraculous signs that this man does!" So the Pharisees disagreed with each other {regarding who Jesus was}. ¹⁷So the Pharisees asked the blind man again, "What do you say about this man, since you say that he is the one who enabled you to see?" The man said, "He must be a prophet."

¹⁸Because {the man believed that Jesus was a prophet}, the Jewish leaders did not believe that the man had been blind and then became able to see until after they summoned the man's parents {in order to question them}.

¹⁹They asked his parents, "Is this man your son? Do you say that he was blind when he was born? {If that is so,} then how is he able to see at this time?" ²⁰His parents replied, "We are certain that this man is our son. We are also certain that he was blind when he was born. ²¹Nevertheless, we do not know how he is able to see at this time. We also do not know who enabled him to see. Ask him. He is old enough to speak on his own behalf." ²²{The Jewish leaders had previously agreed among themselves that they would ban anyone who declared that Jesus was the Messiah from entering the Jewish meeting place. Because of this, the man's parents were afraid of them and told them those things.} ²³That is also why they said to the Jewish leaders, "Ask him. He is old enough."

²⁴So the Jewish leaders summoned for a second time the man who had been blind. They told him, "Glorify God {by speaking only the truth}! We ourselves are certain that this man {who you say healed you} is sinful." ²⁵The man whom Jesus healed replied, "I do not know if he is sinful or not. One thing I do know is that I used to be blind, but now I can see." ²⁶They then asked him, "What did he do to you {in order to heal you}? How did he enable you to see?" ²⁷He replied, "I have already told you the answers to those questions, but you did not listen to what I said. Why do you want me to tell you again? Could it be that you also desire to become his disciples?" ²⁸Then they spoke insultingly to him: "You are that man's disciple! As for us, we are Moses's disciples!" ²⁹We are certain that God spoke to Moses {long ago}. As for this man, we do not even know where he came from!" ³⁰The man replied, "I am amazed! You do not even know where he came from, but he is the one who enabled me to see!" ³¹We are certain that God does not respond to {the prayers of} sinful people. Rather, he responds to {the prayers of} people who worship him and who do what he wants them to do. ³²Never before has anyone ever heard that someone enabled a man to see who was blind when he was born!" ³³If this man had not come from God, he could not have done even one {miracle like that}!" ³⁴The Jewish leaders replied to him, "You were born blind entirely as a result of {your parents'} sins! How dare you teach us!" Then they banned him from the Jewish meeting place.

³⁵Jesus heard that the Jewish leaders had banned the man he had healed from the Jewish meeting place. When he {searched for him and} found him, he asked him, "Do you trust the Son of Man?" ³⁶The man answered, "Sir, who is he? {Please tell me,} so that I may trust him." ³⁷Jesus told him, "You have already seen him. I am that very person who is talking to you now." ³⁸The man said, "Lord, I trust {that you are the Son of Man}." Then he went down on his knees and worshiped Jesus.

³⁹Jesus said, "I have come into this world in order to judge its people. {The result will be} that the people who realize they do not perceive God's truth may perceive it, like a blind person becoming able to see. {Another result will be that} the people who think they perceive God's truth will not perceive it, like a person who sees and becomes blind." ⁴⁰When some of the Pharisees who were near Jesus heard him say this, they asked him, "Do you think that we also cannot perceive God's truth, like blind people?" ⁴¹Jesus replied, "If you recognized that you are spiritually blind, you would not be guilty of sin. However, because you claim to perceive God's truth, like someone who sees, you are still guilty of your sin."

Chapter 10

¹"I am telling you the truth: Anyone who enters into the sheep pen by any way other than the pen's gate is a thief or bandit {who has come to steal the sheep}. ²The man who enters the sheep pen through the gate is the shepherd {who takes care} of the sheep. ³The man who guards the gate {when the shepherd is away} opens the gate for the shepherd {when he comes}. The sheep hear the sound of the shepherd's voice. He summons by name {each of} the sheep that belong to him and leads them out of the pen. ⁴After the shepherd has brought out of the pen all of the sheep that belong to him, he walks in front of them. His sheep follow him {from behind} because they recognize the sound of his voice. ⁵His sheep will never follow someone whom they do not know. Rather, they will run away from him because they do not recognize the voices of people they do not know."

⁶Jesus told this illustration {from the work that shepherds do} to the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they did not understand what the illustration meant. ⁷So Jesus spoke to them again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate through which the sheep enter into the sheep pen. ⁸All the leaders who came before me {without God's authority} were thieves and bandits. However, the true sheep did not obey them. ⁹I myself am the gate {to heaven}. God will save {from eternal punishment} anyone who comes to him by trusting in me. {Whoever trusts in me} will be like a sheep who walks around safely and finds food. ¹⁰Your leaders are like thieves who come only to steal, kill, and destroy the sheep. I have come to give the sheep eternal life, which will be full {of blessings}."

¹¹I myself am like a good shepherd. The good shepherd is willing to die {in order to protect and to save} his sheep, {and so am I willing to die for my disciples}. ¹²{Suppose that} someone hires a man who is not a shepherd to protect sheep that do not belong to that man. When he sees a wolf coming {to kill the sheep}, he leaves the sheep

and runs away, so the wolf snatches some of them and causes some others to scatter. ¹³{The hired man runs away} because he was {only protecting the sheep} in order to receive money. He does not care about what happens to the sheep. ¹⁴I myself am like a good shepherd. {Just like a good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him,} I know those who belong to me, and they know me. ¹⁵{We know each other} in the same way that my Father and I know each other. I am willing to die for the benefit of those sheep {who belong to me}. ¹⁶There are also sheep that belong to me and are from a different sheep pen. {They are people who are not Jews.} I must also bring them to myself. They will respond to what I say, and all those who belong to me will be united as one flock, and I will be their one shepherd. ¹⁷My Father loves me because I will willingly die in order that I may make myself alive again. ¹⁸Nobody is forcing me to die. Rather, I myself choose to die. I have authority to willfully die and I have authority to make myself alive again. That is the work my Father has commanded me to do."

¹⁹The Jewish leaders divided {into opposing groups} again on account of what Jesus had said. ²⁰Many of the Jewish leaders said, "A demon is controlling him, and he is crazy! Do not listen to him!" ²¹Some other people said, "What he is saying is not something a man controlled by a demon would ever say. Surely a demon cannot possibly enable a blind person to see!"

²²Then the feast to celebrate the temple dedication in Jerusalem took place. ²³Jesus was walking in the temple courtyard in the place called Solomon's Porch. ²⁴The Jewish leaders gathered around Jesus and said, "How long will you keep us wondering about who you are? If you are the Messiah, then tell us plainly {so that we can know}."

²⁵Jesus answered them, "I have told you, but you still do not believe me. The miraculous deeds I do by my Father's authority tell you what you need to know about me. ²⁶However, you people still do not believe in me, because you do not belong to me. You are like sheep that are not part of my flock. ²⁷{Just like sheep obey the voice of their shepherd,} my people respond to what I say. I know them, and they are my disciples. ²⁸I enable them to live forever {with God in heaven}. No one can ever destroy them, and {no one can ever} take them away from me. ²⁹My Father gave them to me. He is greater than anyone, and no one is able to take them away from him. ³⁰My father and I are one God."

³¹The Jewish leaders again picked up stones in order to throw them at him and kill him. ³²Jesus said to them, "You have seen me do many miraculous good deeds that my Father told me to do. For which one of them are you going to kill me with stones?" ³³The Jewish leaders replied, "We do not want to kill you with stones because you did a good deed. Rather, {we want to kill you} because you blaspheme God by claiming to be God even though you are just a man!" ³⁴Jesus replied to them, "In the Old Testament a prophet wrote that God said, 'I have said that you are gods.' ³⁵Since God called those to whom he spoke 'gods' and no one can prove that the Scripture is false, ³⁶why do you say that I am blaspheming God because I said that I am the Son of God? I am the one whom my Father specially selected {to belong to him} and sent into this world. ³⁷If I am not doing the miraculous works that my Father wants me to do, then you should not trust me. ³⁸However, because I am doing these {miraculous} deeds, you should trust {what} these deeds {reveal about me} even though you do not trust me. {You should do that} in order to learn and comprehend that my Father and I are completely united."

³⁹Because {he said these things}, the Jewish leaders tried again to arrest Jesus, but he got away from them.

⁴⁰Then Jesus went back over {on the east side of} the Jordan River. He went to the place where John the Baptizer had baptized people at the beginning {of his ministry}. Jesus stayed there for a while. ⁴¹Many people came to Jesus there. They said, "John the Baptizer never performed a miraculous sign, but everything that John said about this man is true!" ⁴²Many people trusted in him in that place.

Chapter 11

¹A man named Lazarus became very ill. He lived in the village of Bethany where his sisters Mary and Martha also lived. ²This is the same Mary who later would pour perfume on the Lord and would wipe {the oil off of} his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was ill. ³So the two sisters sent someone to tell Jesus about Lazarus.

They said, "Lord, the one whom you love is very ill. {Please come!}" ⁴When Jesus heard about Lazarus' illness, he said, "This illness will not end in Lazarus' death. Rather, the purpose of this illness is to reveal how great God is. Lazarus became ill in order that the illness may reveal how great I, the Son of God, am." ⁵(Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus.) ⁶So when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, he deliberately remained where he was for two more days.

⁷Then after {those two days} Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go back to the region of Judea." ⁸His disciples said, "Teacher, the Jewish leaders {in Judea} currently want to kill you with stones! You surely should not return there again!" ⁹Jesus replied, "You know that there are 12 hours of daylight. The person who walks during the daytime will walk safely because the light allows him to see where he is going. ¹⁰However, when a person walks during the night, he will stumble because there is no light to allow him to see where he is going."

¹¹After saying these things, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I will go there to wake him up." ¹²So his disciples told him, "Lord, if he is sleeping, then he will get well." ¹³(Jesus was actually speaking about Lazarus' death, but his disciples thought that he was talking about actual sleep.) ¹⁴So Jesus told them clearly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵And I rejoice that I was not there {when he died}. {I let this happen} so that you may trust in me. {This is} for your benefit. Rather than staying here, let us go to where he is." ¹⁶So Thomas, whom they called 'The Twin,' said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go with the Teacher in order that we may die with him."

¹⁷So when Jesus arrived {in the village of Bethany,} he learned that people had already put Lazarus' dead body in a tomb four days before then. ¹⁸(Jerusalem was only about three kilometers away from the village of Bethany.)

¹⁹Many Jewish people came to Martha and Mary {in Bethany} in order to console both of them concerning their brother Lazarus' death. ²⁰When Martha heard {someone say} that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. Mary {did not go with her} but stayed in the house. ²¹When Martha met Jesus, she said to him, "Lord, if you had only been here sooner, my brother would not be dead! ²²However, even now {that he is dead} I am certain that God will do for you whatever you ask him to do." ²³Jesus told her, "Your brother will live again." ²⁴Martha told him, "I am certain that my brother will live again when God raises all dead people on the last day {when he judges everyone}." ²⁵Jesus told her, "I am the one who causes dead people to live again. I am the one who gives people eternal life. Whoever trusts in me will live forever, even if his body dies. ²⁶All those who receive eternal life and trust in me will surely live forever. Do you believe that this is true?" ²⁷Martha told him, "Yes, I do, Lord! I do indeed believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. {You are} the one whom God promised would come into this world."

²⁸After she said that, she returned {to the house} and secretly summoned her sister Mary. She told Mary, "The Teacher has arrived, and he is summoning you." ²⁹When Mary heard what her sister said, she rose quickly and went out to meet Jesus. ³⁰(At that time Jesus had not yet entered the village of Bethany. Rather, he was still at the place where Martha had met him.) ³¹The Jewish people who were comforting Mary in her house saw her rise quickly and go outside, so they followed her. They thought that she was going to the tomb {where they had buried Lazarus} in order to grieve there.

³²When Mary arrived at the place where Jesus had spoken to Martha and saw him, she threw herself down on the ground in front of his feet. She told him, "Lord, if you had only been here sooner, my brother would not be dead!"

³³When Jesus saw her grieving, and the Jewish people with her also grieving, he became extremely agitated. ³⁴He asked, "Where have you buried his body?" They told him, "Lord, come and see {where he is}." ³⁵Jesus started crying.

³⁶So the Jewish people {who were with Mary} said among themselves, "See how much he loved Lazarus!"

³⁷However, others among them said, "He could enable the blind man to see. But maybe he didn't have enough power to prevent this man from dying!"

³⁸Jesus then was emotionally agitated again when he came to the tomb. (It was a cave, and a large rock was covering its entrance.) ³⁹Jesus said, "Remove the rock from the cave's entrance." {However,} Lazarus' sister Martha told him, "Lord, by this time his body will smell bad because he died four days ago." ⁴⁰Jesus told her, "I surely told you that if you trusted me, you would see how great God is!"

⁴¹So some people removed the rock from the cave's entrance. Jesus looked up toward heaven and said, "Father, I thank you for listening to me. ⁴²I know that you always listen to me. Nevertheless, I said that for the sake of the people standing here. I said this in order that they might be confident that you sent me." ⁴³After he said that prayer, he shouted loudly, "Lazarus, come out of the tomb!" ⁴⁴The man who had died came out of the tomb! {The people who prepared him for burial} had wrapped his feet and hands with strips of cloth and had wrapped a cloth around his face. {So} Jesus told the people standing there, "Take off the strips of cloth that bind him. Allow him to go."

⁴⁵As a result, many of the Jewish people who had come to comfort Mary and who had witnessed what Jesus had done trusted him. ⁴⁶Nevertheless, some of the people there went to the Pharisees and reported to them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So the ruling priests and the Pharisees gathered together the members of the highest Jewish ruling council. They were saying to each other, "What are we going to do about this man? He is performing many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸If we allow him to keep doing these miracles, everyone will trust in him {and make him their king}. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our temple and our people!"

⁴⁹One member of this council was Caiaphas. He was the high priest during that year. He told them, "You people know nothing! ⁵⁰You do not realize that it would be much better for you to have one man die on behalf of the people than let the Romans kill all of the Jewish people." ⁵¹{Caiaphas did not say this because he thought of it himself. Rather, since he was the high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jewish people. ⁵²{He was also prophesying that Jesus would die,} not only for the Jewish people, but also in order to gather into one people all the children of God whom God has dispersed throughout the world.) ⁵³So in the days following the day that Caiaphas prophesied, the Jewish council made plans to kill Jesus.

⁵⁴Because of that, Jesus no longer traveled around publicly among his Jewish opponents. Instead, he left Jerusalem and went to a town called Ephraim that is in the region near the desolate area. He remained there with his disciples {for a while}.

⁵⁵At that time the Jewish Passover celebration was about to take place. Many people went up to Jerusalem from the region. They came before the Passover celebration began in order to clean themselves {according to the Jewish rules for attending the celebration}. ⁵⁶The people {who came to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration} were searching for Jesus. While they were standing in the temple {courtyard}, they asked each other, "What do you think? He will surely not come to the Passover celebration!" ⁵⁷{Some time earlier} the Jewish ruling priests and the Pharisees had made a command that anyone who found out where Jesus was must report his location to them so that they could arrest him.

Chapter 12

¹Jesus arrived in the village of Bethany six days before the Jewish Passover celebration began. {Bethany was the village} where Lazarus dwelled. He was the man whom Jesus made alive again after he had died. ²There in Bethany, some of Jesus' friends gave a dinner to honor Jesus. Martha served the food to the guests, and Lazarus was among those who were sitting together and eating with Jesus. ³Mary then took a bottle that contained about half a liter of very expensive perfume, which was pure oil from nard plants, and she poured it out on Jesus' feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. The pleasant scent of the perfume filled the entire house.

⁴However, Judas Iscariot {objected}. (He was the one among Jesus' disciples who would soon help the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus.) He said, ⁵"We should have sold this perfume for the money that a man can earn in 300 days of work. Then we could have given that money to poor people!" ⁶{Judas did not say this because he cared about poor people. Rather, {he said this} because he was a thief. He kept charge of the bag that held their money, but he would steal the money that people gave him to put in the bag.) ⁷So Jesus said, "Leave her alone! She saved the perfume in order to keep it to prepare me for the time when I {die and} am buried. ⁸{She did the right thing} because poor people will always be among you {whom you can help}, but I will not be with you much longer."

⁹A large crowd of Jews heard that Jesus was {in Bethany}, so they went there. {They came} not only because Jesus was there, but also because they wanted to see Lazarus. He was the man whom Jesus made alive again after he had died. ¹⁰By contrast, the ruling priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. ¹¹{The ruling priests wanted to kill Lazarus} because he was the reason why many of the Jews were no longer believing what they were teaching and were trusting in Jesus instead.

¹²The next day the large crowd of people that had come {to Jerusalem} to {celebrate} the Passover celebration found out that Jesus was on his way there. ¹³So they cut branches off of palm trees and went out to the road to welcome him {as he came into the city}. They were shouting, "Please, save us! May God bless the one who comes with his authority. That one is the King of Israel!" ¹⁴When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he found a young donkey and sat on it {in order to ride it into the city}. {By doing this,} he fulfilled what some prophets had written in Scripture:

¹⁵"Do not be afraid, you who live in Jerusalem.

Look! Your King is coming.

He is riding on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶When these events happened, his disciples did not understand that they were a fulfillment of what those prophets had written. However, after God glorified Jesus {by bringing him back to life}, they remembered what the prophets had written about him and that people had done those things to him.

¹⁷The crowd of people that was following along with Jesus kept telling others that they had seen Jesus summon Lazarus to come out of the tomb and had seen Jesus make him alive again after he had died. ¹⁸A different crowd of people went out of the city gate to meet Jesus. {They did so} because they heard that he had done the miraculous sign of {making Lazarus alive again}. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to each other, "See! We are failing to stop him. Look! Everyone is becoming his disciples!"

²⁰Some people who were not Jews were among the people who went up {to Jerusalem} in order to worship God during the Passover celebration. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from the city of Bethsaida, which is in the region of Galilee. They asked him, "Sir, would you introduce us to Jesus?" ²²Then Philip reported this to Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus {about the Greeks}. ²³Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, "It is now the time for God to show everyone how great I, the Son of Man, am. ²⁴I am telling you the truth: {My life is like a seed.} Unless a seed of wheat is planted in the ground and dies, it will only be one seed. But if it dies in the ground, then it will grow and produce much wheat. ²⁵Anyone who wants to keep on living more than {be my disciple} will die, but anyone who wants to {be my disciple} more than to keep on living in this sinful world will keep his life forever. ²⁶Anyone who wants to serve me must be my disciple. My servant will be with me {in heaven}. My Father will honor anyone who serves me.

²⁷At this moment I feel greatly distressed. I should surely not say, 'Father, prevent me from experiencing this time {when I will suffer and die!}' No, {I will not do that,} because this is the very reason I have lived up to this time {when I will suffer and die}. ²⁸Father, show how great you are!"

Then God spoke from heaven, "I have already shown how great I am; I will do it again!" ²⁹The crowd of people that was standing there heard the voice of God as well. Some of them said it was just the sound of thunder. Some other people said that an angel had spoken to Jesus. ³⁰Jesus replied to them, "The voice that you heard was God's voice. {He did not speak} for my benefit, but for yours!" ³¹Now is the time for God to judge the people in this world. Now is the time when he will throw out {Satan, who is} the one who rules this world. ³²As for me, when people raise me high {on a cross}, I will cause all peoples to come to me." ³³{He said this to let the people know the way he would soon die.}

³⁴The crowd of people then replied to him, "We have learned from Scripture that the Messiah will live forever. So why do you say that the Son of Man will be lifted up {to die on a cross}? Who is this 'Son of Man' you are speaking

about?" ³⁵Jesus told them, "I am the light {that reveals God's truth and goodness}. I will be with you only a little longer. Live according to my example while I am still here in order to prevent the darkness {that is sin and evil} from controlling you. Those who live sinfully are like people who wander around in darkness, not knowing where they are going! ³⁶Trust in me, the light {that reveals God's truth and goodness}, while I am still with you. {Do this} in order to be God's people, {those who know his truth and goodness}."

After he said those things, Jesus left them and hid himself from the people. ³⁷Even though Jesus had done many miraculous signs in front of the people, most of them did not trust in him. ³⁸Their unbelief happened in order to make come true what Isaiah the prophet had written {long ago}:

"Lord, no one has believed what we said!

{It seems like} no one has seen the power that the Lord has revealed!" ³⁹They could not trust in Jesus for this reason: Isaiah had also written, ⁴⁰"The Lord has made them unable to perceive what they see,

and he has made them stubborn.

{He has done this} in order that they would not perceive what they see,

and would not truly understand,

and would not turn away from sin to God, and I would not forgive them."

⁴¹Isaiah wrote that {long ago}, because he saw how great Jesus is and spoke concerning him.

⁴²Although this was true, many members of the highest Jewish governing council trusted in Jesus. Nevertheless, they did not tell others {that they trusted in Jesus}, because they feared that the Pharisees would ban them from entering the Jewish meeting place. ⁴³{They feared this} because they preferred that other people honor them rather than that God would honor them.

⁴⁴Jesus spoke loudly {to a crowd of people}, "Those who trust me are not only trusting me but also {are trusting my Father}, who sent me. ⁴⁵Those who see me are also seeing my Father, who sent me. ⁴⁶I came into this world as the light {that reveals God's truth and goodness} to everyone in the world in order that anyone who trusts in me will not stay in the darkness {that is sin and evil}.

⁴⁷I do not condemn anyone who listens to my teachings but refuses to obey them, because I did not come into this world in order to condemn the people in the world. Rather, I came into this world in order to save them {from being punished for their sins}. ⁴⁸Anyone who rejects me and does not accept {and obey} my teachings will be condemned according to the very teachings I have spoken. On the last day {when God judges everyone,} God will judge that person on the basis of my teachings. ⁴⁹{This will happen} because I did not speak on my own authority. Rather, my Father himself, who sent me, commanded me regarding what I should say and how I should say it. ⁵⁰I am certain that what my Father has commanded me to say is what people must believe in order to live forever {in heaven}. So I say exactly what my Father has told me to say."

Chapter 13

¹On the day before the Passover celebration would begin, Jesus knew that it was the time for him to leave this world and to return to his Father. He always loved his disciples who were with him in this world, and he loved them to the uttermost. ²When Jesus and his disciples were having their evening meal, the devil had already caused Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to think that he should help the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus. ³Jesus knew that his Father had given him complete power and authority over everything, and he also knew that he came from God and would soon return to God. ⁴{Because he knew those things,} Jesus got up from the table where they were eating the evening meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵He poured some water into a

large bowl and started washing his disciples' feet and wiping them dry with the towel that he had wrapped around his waist.

⁶When he came to Simon Peter {to wash his feet}, Peter told him, "Lord, you should not wash my feet!" ⁷Jesus replied to him, "Right now you do not understand what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said, "You will surely never wash my feet!" Jesus replied to him, "If I do not wash you, then you will not inherit God's blessings with me." ⁹Simon Peter told him, "Lord, do not wash my feet only! Wash my hands and my head also!" ¹⁰Jesus told him, "Anyone whom someone has washed only needs to wash his feet. The rest of his body is clean. You disciples are clean, but not all {of you are clean}." ¹¹{Jesus said this about being spiritually clean,} because he knew who was going to help the Jewish leaders arrest him. That is the reason he said, "Not all of you are clean.")

¹²After he finished washing their feet, he put his outer clothing on again. Then he sat down at the table again and told them, "You must understand what I have just done for you!" ¹³You rightly call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' because that is what I am. ¹⁴Since I, your teacher and Lord, have {humbly served you by} washing your feet, you also should {humbly serve each other by} washing each other's feet. ¹⁵{By washing your feet} I have given you an example to follow in order that you should {humbly serve each other} as I have {humbly} served you. ¹⁶I am telling you the truth: Just as a servant is not more important than his master, nor is a messenger more important than the person who has sent him, {you are not more important than me}. ¹⁷Since you now know {that you should humbly serve each other}, God will bless you if you do so.

¹⁸I am not saying that all of you will be blessed. I know well the people whom I have chosen {to be my disciples}. However, what is about to happen must take place in order that what a prophet wrote in scripture can come true: 'The one who shared a meal with me as a friend has opposed me.'

¹⁹From now on I am telling you what will happen before it happens in order that, when it does happen, you may trust that I am {God}. ²⁰I am telling you the truth: Whoever accepts the one I send out also accepts me; and whoever accepts me also accepts my Father who sent me."

²¹After Jesus said this, he felt disturbed. He solemnly declared, "I am telling you the truth: One of you is going to give me up {to my opponents}." ²²His disciples kept looking at one another and wondering who among them he was talking about. ²³One of his disciples, {John} whom Jesus loved, was sitting at the table beside Jesus. ²⁴Simon Peter made a gesture to him to indicate that he should ask Jesus which disciple he was talking about. ²⁵So John leaned back against Jesus and {quietly} asked him, "Lord, who is the one who will betray you?" ²⁶Jesus replied, "It is the man to whom I will give this piece of bread after I dip it in the bowl." Then he dipped the bread in the bowl and gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the piece of bread from Jesus, Satan took control of him. Jesus then told him, "Do quickly what you have planned to do." ²⁸{No one else among those sitting at the table knew why Jesus had said that to Judas. ²⁹Some of them thought that Jesus was telling him to go and buy some things that they needed for the Passover celebration or to give some money to the poor. {They thought this} because Judas had the bag that held their money.) ³⁰So after Judas took the bread from Jesus, he immediately went out. (It was night.)

³¹So after Judas left, Jesus said, "Now God has shown people how great I, the Son of Man, am. I have also shown people how great God is. ³²God himself will show {people} how great I, the Son of Man, am, and he will do this right away.

³³{You whom I love as though you were my} children, I will be with you only a little while longer. Then you will look for me, but it will be just like I told the Jewish leaders and am telling you now: You will not be able to come to the place where I am going. ³⁴I now give you this new command in order that you might love each other: You must love each other in the same way that I have loved you. ³⁵If you love each other, everyone {who sees that love} will know that you are my disciples."

³⁶Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "You cannot go with me now to the place where I am going, but you will go there later." ³⁷Peter told him, "Lord, why can't I go with you now? I am willing to

die for you!" ³⁸Jesus replied, "You are not really willing to die for me! I am telling you the truth: You will surely say three times that you do not know me before the rooster crows {in the morning}!"

Chapter 14

¹"Do not be distressed. Trust God. Trust me as well. ²There are many places for people to dwell where my Father dwells. If that were not true, I would have told you so, because I will go there to prepare a place for you to dwell. ³And after I go there to prepare a place for you to dwell, I will return and take you to be with me, in order for you also to be with me where I am. ⁴You know how to go to the place where I am going."

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we have no idea where you are going! We cannot possibly know how to go there!"

⁶Jesus told him, "I am how people can go there. I am the one who reveals what is true about God, and the one who gives eternal life to people. The only way people can come to my Father is by trusting me. ⁷Since you know who I am, you know my Father also. From this time forward, you know him, and it is as though you have seen him."

⁸Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, let us see the Father and that will satisfy us!" ⁹Jesus said to him, "I have been with you all for such a long time. Surely you know me, Philip! Those who have seen me are like those who have seen my Father. So you have no reason to say 'Let us see the Father'! ¹⁰You surely must believe that I and my Father are completely united! I did not speak all that I have spoken to you on my own. Rather, my Father who is united with me is working his own miraculous works through me. ¹¹Trust me when I say that I and my Father are completely united! Otherwise, if you are not going to trust what I say, at least trust me on account of all the miraculous works {that you have seen me do}. ¹²I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will also do the miraculous works that I do. He will do even greater works than those I do, because I am going to my Father. ¹³I will do anything that you request as my representative. I will do this in order that I, his Son, might show how great my Father is. ¹⁴I will do anything that you request from me as my representative.

¹⁵If you really love me, you will obey everything that I have commanded you. ¹⁶Then I will request from my Father, and he will answer me by giving you another one to help you in order for him to be with you forever. ¹⁷{He is} the Holy Spirit who declares what is true about God. The unbelieving people in the world cannot accept him, because they do not see him or know him. You disciples know this Spirit because he dwells with you, and he will later dwell in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you without anyone to take care of you. I will soon return to you. ¹⁹In a little while the unbelievers in the world will not see me anymore, but you yourselves will see me again. Because I will soon live again, you too will live again. ²⁰When you see me again, you will know that I am united with my Father and that you and I are completely united. ²¹Whoever knows and obeys what I command truly loves me. And my Father loves whoever loves me. I will love that person too, and I will reveal myself to that person."

²²Judas (not Judas Iscariot, {but a different disciple with the same name}) spoke to Jesus. {He said,} "Lord, what has changed to cause you to reveal yourself just to us and not to all the people in the world?" ²³Jesus replied to him, "Whoever loves me obeys my teaching. My Father will love that person. He and I will come to that person and dwell inside that person. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not obey my teachings. What you have just heard me say I did not say on my own. Rather, {what I have said has come} from my Father, who has sent me. ²⁵I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But my Father will send the Holy Spirit in my place. He is the one who will help you. He will teach you all {of God's truth that you need to know}. He will also cause you to remember all the things that I have told you. ²⁷As I leave you I give you a peaceful feeling. It is my peaceful feeling that I am giving to you. I give to you {a peaceful feeling} in a different manner than the people in the world give it. Do not be distressed or afraid.

²⁸You heard me tell you that I am going away and will later return to you. If you really loved me, you would rejoice that I am returning to my Father {in heaven}, because he is superior to me. ²⁹I have told you these things now before they happen so that you will continue to trust me when they do happen. ³⁰I will not be able to talk with you much longer, because {Satan,} the one who rules this world, is coming. But he has no control over me. ³¹However,

this will happen in order for the people in the world to know that I love my Father and I will do exactly what my Father has commanded me to do. Rise, let us leave this place.”

Chapter 15

¹“I am like a genuine vine {that grows fruit}. My Father is like a gardener {who takes care of it}. ²My Father cuts off and removes every branch that seems to be part of me but does not produce fruit. As for every branch that produces fruit, he cleans it by pruning it so that it may produce even more fruit. ³You are like branches that have already been cleaned by pruning because of the teaching that I have told you before. ⁴Stay united with me, and I will stay united with you. As the branch cannot produce any fruit unless it stays attached to the vine, so you cannot produce spiritual fruit unless you stay united with me.

⁵I am like the vine; you are like the branches. If you stay united with me and I stay united with you, you will produce a lot of fruit. {This is true} because you cannot do anything without my help. ⁶As for anyone who does not stay united with me, that person is like a branch that the gardener cuts off and throws away. After such branches dry up, the gardener’s workers pick them up and throw them into a fire and burn them up. ⁷If you stay united with me and obey what I have taught you, you can request anything from God that you want, and he will grant your request. ⁸You show people how great my Father is by producing a lot of fruit and being my disciples.

⁹I have loved you in the same way that my Father has loved me. Now keep living in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love. ¹⁰If you obey what I have commanded you, you will be acting in a way that is appropriate for those whom I love, just like I have obeyed what my Father has commanded me, and I act in a way that is appropriate for someone whom he loves. ¹¹I told you these things in order that you may be as joyful as I am and {in order that} you may be joyful to the greatest degree. ¹²This is what I am commanding you to do: Love each other in the way that I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than a person who is willing to die for his friends. ¹⁴You are really my friends if you keep doing what I have commanded you to do. ¹⁵I am not going to call you my servants any longer, because a servant does not understand what his master is doing. I now call you friends, because I have made you understand everything that my Father has told me. ¹⁶You did not choose {to be my disciples}. Rather, I chose you {to be my disciples} and assigned you {to this role} in order that you would go out and produce spiritual fruit and {in order that} the fruit you produce should last forever. {I also chose you} in order that my Father would give you everything that you request from him as my representatives. ¹⁷I command you to do these things in order that you would love one another.

¹⁸Since the people who oppose God in the world detest you, you must realize that they detested me first. ¹⁹If you were part of the people who oppose God in the world, those unbelievers would love you as they love their own. However, I chose you to come out from among them. The people who oppose God in the world detest you because you are not part of them. ²⁰Remember that I told you that a servant is not more important than his master. Since they have caused me to suffer, they will certainly cause you to suffer as well. If any of them have obeyed my teaching, they will also obey what you teach. ²¹Yet the unbelievers in this world will do all these hateful things to you because you represent me {and} because they do not know my Father who has sent me here. ²²If I had not come and taught them {God’s truth}, they would not have been guilty {of rejecting me and my message}. However, {since I have come and taught them}, now they do not have any excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever detests me also detests my Father. ²⁴If I had not performed miraculous works among them that no one else has ever done, they would not be guilty of sin. Yet, as it is, they have seen these works and detest me. They also detest my Father. ²⁵However, this has happened in order that these words that a prophet wrote in their scriptures would come true: ‘They hated me for no reason.’

²⁶When I send to you from my Father the one who will help you, he will tell people who I am. He is the Holy Spirit, who declares what is true about God and goes forth from my Father. ²⁷You also must tell everyone about me, because you have been with me since the very first days when I began my work.”

Chapter 16

¹I told you about these things that will happen so that you would continue trusting in me {when they do happen}.

²The Jews who oppose me will ban you from entering the Jewish meeting places. Yet {something even worse will happen.} The time is coming when all the people who will kill you will think that they are pleasing God by doing so.

³They will do such things because they have never known who I really am, nor who my Father is. ⁴I have told you about these things that will happen in order that when they happen, you will remember that I told you they would happen. I did not tell you about them in the very first days when I began my work, because I was with you then.

⁵"Now I am going back to my Father who sent me. Yet now none of you is asking me where I am going! ⁶You are very sad because I have told you these things. ⁷Nevertheless, I now tell you true information: It is better for you that I leave {than that I stay}. {This is true} because if I do not leave, then the one who will help you will not come to you. However, If I go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸When that one who will help comes, he will convict people in the world of the sins {they have committed}. {He will convict them} of not being righteous, and {he will convict} them that God will judge them. ⁹{He will convict people} of their sin, because they have sinned by not trusting in me. ¹⁰{He will convict people} of not being righteous, because I am going back to my Father, and you will no longer see me {as the example of how to be righteous}. ¹¹{He will convict people} that God will judge them, because he has condemned {Satan, who is} the one who rules this world.

¹²I want to tell you many more things. However, if I tell you now, you will not be able to accept them. ¹³When the Holy Spirit, who declares what is true about God, comes, he will enable you to understand all the truth {you need to know}. {He can do so} because he will not speak from his own authority. Rather, he will say whatever he hears from God, and he will tell you ahead of time about things that will happen. ¹⁴The Holy Spirit will show how great I am by telling you what he has heard from me. ¹⁵Everything my Father has belongs to me. That is why I said that the Holy Spirit will tell you what he has heard from me.

¹⁶After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again." ¹⁷Some of his disciples then asked one another, "What does Jesus mean when he says to us, 'After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again'? And {what does he mean when he says}, 'Because I am going back to my Father'?" ¹⁸So they kept asking, "What does 'after a short time' mean? We do not understand what he is saying."

¹⁹Jesus recognized that his disciples wanted to ask him more questions. So he said to them, "You are asking each other what I meant when I said, 'After a short time you will not see me, and after a short time, you will see me again.' ²⁰I am telling you the truth: You will cry and mourn, but the people who oppose God in the world will rejoice. You will be very sad, but you will change from being sad to being joyful. ²¹A woman experiences pain when she gives birth to a child, because it is the time for her to give birth. Yet she forgets that she suffered after she has given birth to the child, because she is joyful about the fact that she has brought a human being into the world.

²²In the same way, although you are sad at this time, I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will stop you from rejoicing. ²³When you see me again, you will not ask me anything. I am telling you the truth: My Father will give you whatever you request from him as my representatives. ²⁴Up to now you have not requested anything {from my Father} as my representatives. Request {anything from my Father} and you will receive {whatever you request}. God will give it to you in order that you may be joyful to the greatest degree.

²⁵I have told you these things using figurative language, but there will soon be a time when I will not use that kind of language to speak with you anymore. Rather, I will tell you about my Father using language that you can easily understand. ²⁶When you see me again, you will request {anything from God} as my representatives, and I will not have to ask my Father on your behalf, ²⁷because my Father himself loves you because you love me and trust that I came here from God. ²⁸I came from my Father and entered this world. Again I tell you that I will leave this world and go back to my Father."

²⁹His disciples responded, "Finally! Now you are using language that we can easily understand and not using figurative language. ³⁰Now we understand that you know everything. There is no need for anyone to ask you

questions {because you already know what that person will ask}. This is why we trust that you came here from God."

³¹Jesus replied to them, "Now you finally trust me! ³²Look! There will soon be a time, and that time will be very soon, when others will scatter you everywhere. Each of you will go to his own home, and you will leave me by myself. However, I will not be by myself, because my Father is always with me. ³³I have told you all these things that will happen in order that you may feel peaceful {because you are united} with me. In this world you will be afflicted, but be brave! I have defeated the people who oppose God in the world!"

Chapter 17

¹After Jesus told his disciples about these things that would happen, he looked up toward heaven and said, "Father, it is now time {for me to suffer and die}. Show everyone how great I, your Son, am in order that I may show everyone how great you are. ²{Please do this} because you gave me authority over all people in order that I might enable all those whom you chose to come to me to live forever {with me in heaven}. ³This is what it means to live forever: to know you, who are the only real God, and to know me, Jesus the Messiah, the one whom you have sent into the world. ⁴I have shown everyone how great you are while I have been on the earth. {I did this} by finishing the work that you assigned me to do. ⁵Father, at this time show how great I am in your presence with the same greatness that I had in your presence before the time we created the world.

⁶I have shown who you really are to the men whom you have given me from among the people in the world. They belonged to you and you have given them to me. They have obeyed your teaching. ⁷At this time they know that everything you have given me has come from you. ⁸{They know this} because I have told them the teachings that you told me. They themselves accepted those teachings, and they are certain that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me here. ⁹I am praying for them. I am not praying for the people who oppose you in the world. Rather, {I am praying} for those people whom you gave me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰All the disciples that are mine belong to you, and {all the disciples} that belong to you are mine. They show everyone how great I am. ¹¹I will not stay in this sinful world any longer. However, my disciples are staying in it. I will soon return to you. My Father, who is set apart, keep them safe by your same power that you gave to me, in order that they may be united in the same way that we are united. ¹²During the time that I have been with them, I have kept them safe by your same power that you gave to me. I have guarded them, and only one of them will be eternally ruined. {He is} the one whom you had destined to be eternally ruined in order that the scriptures would come true.

¹³At this time I am about to return to you. I have said these things while I am in this sinful world in order that I may give them my complete joy. ¹⁴I have told them your teaching. {Thus the people who oppose you in} the world have detested them because, like me, they do not belong to those who oppose you. ¹⁵I am not requesting that you take my disciples out of this sinful world. Rather, {I am requesting} that you keep them safe from being harmed by Satan, the evil one. ¹⁶Like me, they do not belong to the people who oppose you in the world. ¹⁷Set my disciples apart to serve you by {enabling them to know and live according to} what is true. Your teaching is what is true. ¹⁸I am sending them among the people in the world in the same way that you sent me among them. ¹⁹I set myself apart as a sacrifice on their behalf in order that they also may set themselves apart to serve you by {knowing and living according to} what is true."

²⁰Now I am praying not only for these disciples here, but {I am praying} also for those people who will trust in me by means of what my disciples say. ²¹{I pray} that they may all be united in the same way that you, my Father, and I are completely united. {I pray} that they may also be united to us in order that the people in the world might know that you sent me here. ²²In order that they may be united in the same way that we are united, I have honored the people who trust in me just like you honored me. ²³{This means that} I am united with them, and you are united with me. {I have done this} in order that they may be completely united together in order that the people in the world may know that you sent me here and that you love the people who trust in me in the same way that you love me.

²⁴“My Father, I want these people whom you have given to me to be with me where I will be in heaven in order that they can see how glorious I am. You made me glorious because you have loved me from before the time when we created the universe.

²⁵My Father, who always does what is right, the people who oppose you in the world do not know who you are, but I know who you are. These people who trust me know that you have sent me here. ²⁶I have made them know who you are. I will continue to do so in order that they may love others like you love me and in order that I may be united with them.”

Chapter 18

¹After Jesus finished praying, he left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side of the valley they entered into a grove {of olive trees}.

²Judas is the one who was about to help Jesus’ opponents arrest him. He knew the place where Jesus was because Jesus often went there with his disciples. ³So Judas brought to that grove a group of Roman soldiers and some temple guards who had been sent by the ruling priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lamps, and weapons. ⁴Because Jesus knew what was going to happen to him, he went forward and asked the soldiers and temple guards, “Who are you looking for?” ⁵They replied to him, “Jesus from Nazareth.” Jesus told them, “I am {that person}.” (Judas was standing with them. He was the one who was helping Jesus’ opponents arrest him.) ⁶When Jesus told them, “I am {that person},” they stepped back and involuntarily fell down to the ground. ⁷Jesus then asked them again, “Who are you looking for?” They answered, “Jesus from Nazareth.” ⁸Jesus replied, “I told you that I am {that person}. Since I am the one whom you are looking for, let these other men go. ⁹(This happened in order that these words that he had said to his Father would come true: “I did not lose even one of those whom you gave me.”)

¹⁰Simon Peter had a short sword. He took it out of its sheath and struck the high priest’s servant with it, cutting off his right ear. Malchus was that servant’s name. ¹¹Jesus then told Peter, “Put your short sword back into its sheath! I must surely suffer in the way that my Father has planned for me {to suffer}!”

¹²The group of Roman soldiers, along with their leader and some of the temple guards from the Jewish leaders, seized Jesus and tied his hands. ¹³Then they took him to Annas first, because he was Caiaphas’s father-in-law, and Caiaphas was the high priest that year. ¹⁴(It was Caiaphas who had advised the other Jewish leaders that it would be much better to have one man die on behalf of the people {than to let the Romans kill them}.)

¹⁵Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did one other disciple. Annas the high priest knew the other disciple, so he was allowed to enter the high priest’s courtyard {when the soldiers and guards took} Jesus there. ¹⁶However, Peter had to stay outside at the door. Therefore, that disciple who knew the high priest went out again and spoke to the servant girl who was watching the door. Then he was allowed to bring Peter into {the courtyard}. ¹⁷That servant girl who was watching the door then told Peter, “You are surely one of the disciples of the man {whom they have arrested}!” He replied, “No, I am not!” ¹⁸(It was cold, so the high priest’s servants and the temple guards made a fire and were standing and warming themselves around it. Peter was also standing and warming himself there with them.)

¹⁹The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰Jesus replied to him, “I have spoken in public to everyone {who would listen}. I have always taught in the Jewish meeting places and in the temple. {I have taught in the places} where many Jews gather. I have never said anything secretly. ²¹You should not ask me! Ask the people who heard what I taught them. They certainly know what I said.” ²²After Jesus said this, one of the temple guards who was standing near him slapped him. He said, “You should not answer the high priest like that!” ²³Jesus replied to him, “If what I said was wrong, tell me what it was. However, if what I said was right, you should not slap me.” ²⁴Then Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, the other high priest, while his hands were still tied.

²⁵Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself {in the courtyard}, when someone said to him, "You are surely also one of the disciples of this man whom they have arrested!" Peter denied this and said, "No, I am not!" ²⁶One of the high priest's servants was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. He said to Peter, "Surely I saw you in the {olive tree} grove with the man whom they have arrested!" ²⁷Peter then again denied {that he had been with Jesus}. A rooster crowed immediately {after he did that}.

²⁸The Jewish leaders then brought Jesus from Caiaphas' house to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. (It was early morning. The Jewish leaders did not enter Pilate's headquarters {because Pilate was not a Jew. If they entered a non-Jew's home, they thought} they would defile themselves and be unable to eat the Passover celebration meal.) ²⁹So Pilate came out to talk to them. He asked them, "What are you accusing this man of doing?" ³⁰The Jewish leaders replied, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you!" ³¹So Pilate told them, "You yourselves take him and judge him by your own law." The Jewish leaders replied, "We want to execute him, but your Roman law prevents us from doing that." ³²(This happened in order that what Jesus had said about how he would soon die would come true.)

³³Pilate then went back inside his headquarters. He commanded soldiers to bring Jesus to him, and he asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴Jesus replied, "Are you asking me this question because you thought of it yourself, or did others tell you this concerning me?" ³⁵Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew! Your own countrymen and the ruling priests brought you to me. What wrong have you done?" ³⁶Jesus replied, "The kingdom that I rule over does not belong to this sinful world. If it did, my servants would have fought in order to prevent the Jewish leaders from arresting me. But, as it is, the kingdom that I rule over does not belong to this sinful world." ³⁷Then Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus replied, "You yourself say so. This is why I was born into this world: I came in order to tell people what is true about God. Everyone who believes what is true about God accepts and obeys what I say." ³⁸Pilate said to him, "Nobody knows what is really true!"

After Pilate said that, he went outside and talked to the Jewish leaders again. He told them, "I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law." ³⁹However, you Jews have a custom: Every year during the Passover celebration you ask me, and I release to you someone who is in prison. So do you want me to release your king to you?" ⁴⁰The Jewish leaders then shouted again, "No, do not release this man, but release Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

Chapter 19

¹So at that time Pilate {ordered his soldiers to} take Jesus and beat him with whips. ²The soldiers also took some branches with thorns on them and wound them together to make something like a crown. Then they put it on Jesus' head and put a purple robe on him {in order to mock him}. ³They kept approaching him and jeering at him, saying, "We salute you, King of the Jews!" and kept slapping his face.

⁴Pilate came outside again and said to the Jewish leaders, "Look, I am about to bring him out to you in order that you can know that I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law." ⁵So Jesus came out. He was wearing the crown made of branches with thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, "Look, here is the man!" ⁶When the ruling priests and temple guards saw Jesus, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate told them, "You yourselves take him and crucify him! As for me, I have found no evidence that this man has broken a law." ⁷The Jewish leaders replied to Pilate, "We have a certain law that says he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." ⁸When Pilate heard that, he was more afraid {than before of what would happen to himself if he condemned Jesus to die}. ⁹He entered his headquarters once more {and commanded the soldiers to bring Jesus back inside. Then} he asked Jesus, "Where did you come from?" However, Jesus did not answer his question. ¹⁰So Pilate said to him, "You should answer me! You surely know that I have the power to release you, and I also have the power to crucify you!" ¹¹Jesus replied to him, "The only power you have over me is the power that God has given you. So the man who brought me to you has committed a worse sin than you are committing."

¹²From that moment on, Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, "If you release this man, you are not loyal to Caesar! Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." ¹³So when Pilate heard that, he {ordered his soldiers to} bring Jesus out. Then Pilate sat down {to pronounce a verdict} on the seat where he usually pronounced verdicts. This was at a place people called "The Stone Pavement," which was "Gabbatha" in the language spoken by the Jews. ¹⁴{It was {the day before the Passover celebration, which was} the day when the Jewish people prepared for the celebration. It was almost noon.} Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, "Look, here is your king!" ¹⁵They shouted, "Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!" Pilate {mocked} them by saying, "Should I {order my soldiers to} crucify your king?" The ruling priests replied, "Caesar is our only king!" ¹⁶Then, because of what they said, Pilate ordered his soldiers to crucify Jesus. Then the soldiers took Jesus away {in order to crucify him}.

¹⁷Jesus went out, carrying his cross by himself to the place that people called "The Place of a Skull," which was "Golgotha" in the language spoken by the Jews." ¹⁸The soldiers crucified him at that place. They also crucified two other men with him. One man was on either side of Jesus, so that Jesus was between them.

¹⁹Pilate also {ordered someone} to write a notice on a board and fasten it to Jesus' cross. {That person} wrote on it, 'Jesus from Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' ²⁰Many Jewish people read this notice because the place where the soldiers crucified Jesus was close to the city of Jerusalem and {because} someone wrote the notice in three languages, which were the languages spoken by Jews, Romans, and Greeks. ²¹The ruling Jewish priests returned to Pilate and said, "You should not have written on that notice, 'The King of the Jews.' Rather, {you should have written,} 'This man said that he is the King of the Jews.'" ²²Pilate replied, "What I {ordered my soldiers} to write on the notice is what they have written. {I will not change it.}" ²³After the soldiers had put Jesus on the cross, they took his clothes and divided them into four equal parts, one part was for each soldier. {However, they kept his} tunic {separate}. The weaver had woven this tunic from top to bottom from one piece of cloth that did not have any seams. ²⁴So the soldiers said to each other, "Let us not tear this tunic. Instead, let us decide who will keep it by gambling {and giving it to the winner}." That occurred in order to make this scripture come true:

"They divided my clothes among them.

They gambled for my clothing."

That is why the soldiers did those things.

²⁵Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near the cross that he was hanging on. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother {standing there} and the disciple John whom Jesus loved standing near her, he told his mother, "Madam, here is the one who will take care of you like a son would." ²⁷Next, he said to John, "Here is the one whom you will take care of like you would your own mother!" From that moment, John took her to live in his own home.

²⁸A little while later, because Jesus knew that he had already done everything that God had sent him to do, {and} in order to make another {prophecy in} scripture come true, he said, "I am thirsty!" ²⁹Someone had put a jar containing cheap wine there {and Jesus was thirsty}. So the soldiers took a reed from a hyssop plant and put a sponge on it. {Then they dipped the sponge} in the cheap wine and held it up to Jesus' mouth. ³⁰So Jesus drank the cheap wine and then said, "I have completed {everything that I came here to do}!" And he bowed his head and voluntarily died.

³¹The Jewish leaders then asked Pilate to {order his soldiers to} break the legs of the three men on crosses {so that the men would die more quickly} and take away their bodies in order that the bodies would not remain on the crosses during the Jewish day for rest. {They asked this} because it was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the Passover celebration {and the day for rest, and leaving dead bodies on crosses during those days violated Jewish law}. {Since the next day was also the day for rest, it was a very important day.} ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man, who had been crucified at the same time as Jesus. {Then they broke the legs} of the other man. ³³However, when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was dead already. So they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers stabbed Jesus' side with a spear, and right away blood and water poured out {of the wound}. ³⁵{I, John, am the one who saw this happen and have testified about it and what I have testified is true. I

am certain that I am saying what is true; I say it in order that you may trust in Jesus as well.)³⁶ These things happened {to Jesus' body} in order to make {this prophecy in} scripture come true: "No one will break any of his bones."

³⁷{They} also {made} another {prophecy in} scripture {come true}. It states: "They will look at the man whom they have stabbed."

³⁸After these things happened, Joseph, who was a man originally from the city of Arimathea, asked Pilate to allow him to take away Jesus' body. {He did this} because he was one of Jesus' disciples. However, he did not tell anyone that, because he was afraid of the other Jewish leaders. Pilate allowed Joseph to take away Jesus' body, so Joseph went and did so. ³⁹Nicodemus also came. {He was the man} who had once come {and spoken} with Jesus at night. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloe spices {to prepare Jesus' body for burial}. Those spices weighed about 33 kilograms. ⁴⁰They took Jesus' body and wrapped strips of linen cloth around it and put the {myrrh and aloe} spices {under the strips of cloth}. {They did this} according to the Jewish customs about burying bodies. ⁴¹{There was a garden near the place where the soldiers had crucified Jesus. In the garden was a newly made burial cave. No one had yet buried anyone in that cave.} ⁴²So they put Jesus' body in that tomb because it was nearby and because it was the day when the Jewish people prepared for the Passover celebration {so they had to bury the body before sundown}.

Chapter 20

¹Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb {where they had buried Jesus}. She saw that someone had moved the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. ²So she ran to where Simon Peter and the other disciple, John, whom Jesus loved, {were staying}. She told them, "Some people have removed the Lord Jesus' body from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put it!" ³When they heard this, Peter and John left where they were staying and went to the tomb. ⁴They were both running, but John ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb before him. ⁵When John bent down {and looked into the tomb}, he saw the strips of linen cloth {that they had wrapped around Jesus' body} lying where his body had lain, but he did not go into the tomb. ⁶Simon Peter was running behind John. He arrived there as well and went inside the tomb. He also saw the strips of linen cloth lying where Jesus' body had lain. ⁷Peter also saw the cloth that someone had wrapped around Jesus' head. {It was} not lying with the strips of linen cloth. Rather, someone had folded it and set it apart from them. ⁸Then John, that other disciple who had reached the tomb before Peter, went inside as well. He saw these things and believed {that Jesus had become alive again}. ⁹{At that time they did not understand what the prophets had written in those scriptures which said that Jesus had to die and become alive again.}

¹⁰The disciples then returned to the places where they were staying {in Jerusalem}. ¹¹Mary Magdalene remained standing and crying outside of the tomb. While she was crying, she bent down {and looked} inside the tomb. ¹²She saw two angels wearing white clothing. {They were} sitting on the place where people had laid Jesus' body. One angel was sitting on the place where Jesus' head had been. The other angel was sitting on the place where Jesus' feet had been. ¹³They asked her, "Madam, why are you crying?" She told them, "{I am crying} because some people have removed my Lord Jesus' body {from this tomb}, and I do not know where they have put it!" ¹⁴After she said that, she turned around and saw someone standing there. {It was Jesus,} but she did not recognize him. ¹⁵He asked her, "Madam, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She thought that the man speaking to her was the gardener, so she told him, "Sir, if you have carried Jesus' body away, tell me where you have put it. I will take it {and bury it again}." ¹⁶Jesus {called her by name,} saying, "Mary!" She turned {toward him again and} said to him, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher" in the language spoken by the Jews). ¹⁷Jesus told her, "Stop clinging to me, because I have not yet returned to {heaven to be with} my Father. Go to the disciples, my brothers, and tell them that I am about to return to {heaven to be with} my God and Father, who is also your God and Father." ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord Jesus!" {She} also told them what Jesus had told her.

¹⁹On the evening of that same Sunday, the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were staying, because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus suddenly arrived and stood among them. He told them, "May God give you peace!" ²⁰After he said this, he showed his disciples the wounds that were in his hands and side. They were very happy when they saw the Lord Jesus! ²¹Jesus then told them a second time, "May God give you peace! I am sending you {into the world} just like my Father sent me." ²²After he said this, Jesus blew on them and said, "Accept the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone's sins, God will forgive that person for those sins. If you do not forgive someone's sins, God will not forgive that person for those sins."

²⁴Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, whom they called 'The Twin,' was not there among his other disciples while Jesus was there among them. ²⁵The other disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord Jesus!" However, he told them, "I will only believe you if I see the holes in his hands that were caused by nails and put my fingers in them and if I put my hand into the wound on his side {that was made by a spear}."

²⁶Eight days later, Jesus' disciples were again inside a house, and this time Thomas was with them. Although they had locked the doors, Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger into the holes here, and see the holes in my hands, and put out your hand, and place it in the wound in my side! Stop doubting {that I became alive again}. Rather, believe {that it is true}!"

²⁸Thomas replied, "You are my Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus told him, "Now you believe {that I have become alive again} because you see me. God {surely} blesses those who have not seen me but yet believe {that I have become alive again}."

³⁰Now Jesus also did many other miraculous signs while his disciples were with him, {but} I did not write about them in this book. ³¹Nevertheless, I have written about the signs in this book in order that you may trust that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. {I also wrote about these things} in order that, by trusting {that Jesus is the Messiah}, you may have eternal life through him.

Chapter 21

¹After those things happened, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, {which is also known as the Sea of Galilee}. This is how he appeared to them: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (whom they called 'The Twin'), Nathaniel (who was from Cana, which is a town in the region of Galilee), the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two of Jesus' other disciples were together. ³Simon Peter told the other disciples with him, "I am going to catch some fish." They told him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat {and fished}, but they did not catch any fish that night. ⁴At dawn the next morning Jesus stood on the shore of the sea, but the disciples who were fishing did not know that it was him. ⁵Jesus then called to them, "Dear friends, you do not have any fish, do you?" They replied, "We do not." ⁶He told them, "Throw your net off the right side of the boat and you will catch some fish." So they did so, and they caught so many fish that they were not able to pull the net {into the boat}. ⁷I, the disciple whom Jesus loved, then told Peter, "It is the Lord Jesus!" So when Simon Peter heard this, he put on his coat (he had taken it off to work) and jumped into the water {to swim to the shore}. ⁸The rest of the disciples who had been fishing came to the shore in the boat, while pulling the net full of fish {behind the boat}. (They were not far from the shore, only 90 meters away.) ⁹When they reached the shore, they saw a fire {that Jesus had prepared} and a fish he was cooking on it. {There was} also a loaf of bread. ¹⁰Jesus told them, "Bring {over here} some of those fish that you have just caught!" ¹¹So Simon Peter went back {to the boat} and dragged the net to the shore. {It was} full of 153 large fish. Even though there were so many fish, the net did not tear. ¹²Jesus told them, "Come {here and} eat breakfast!" None of the disciples were bold enough to ask him who he was. They knew it was the Lord Jesus. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴(This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after God had caused him to become alive again.)

¹⁵When they finished eating breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these {others love me}?" Peter replied to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of those who trust in me." ¹⁶Jesus asked him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied to him,

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of those who trust in me." ¹⁷Jesus asked him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times if he loved him. Peter replied to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of those who trust in me. ¹⁸I am telling you the truth: When you were young, you put your own clothes on, and you walked wherever you wanted to go. However, when you are old, you will extend your hands away from your body, and someone else will put clothes on you and take you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹(Jesus said this to indicate how Peter would die in order to show people how great God is). Then Jesus told him, "Come be my disciple!"

²⁰When Peter turned around, he saw John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, walking behind them. John was the one who had leaned close to Jesus during the dinner {before Jesus died} and asked, "Lord, who is going to betray you?"

²¹So when Peter saw John, he asked Jesus, "Lord, what is going to happen to this man?" ²²Jesus said to him, "If I want him to continue living until I return, that is not your concern! As for you, {continue to} be my disciple!"

²³Because {Jesus said this}, the rumor that the disciple John was not going to die was repeated among the believers. However, Jesus did not tell Peter that John would not die. Rather, he said, "If I want him to continue living until I return, that is not your concern!"

²⁴I, John, am the disciple who is testifying about all these things, and I have written them down in this book. We know that what I have testified is true.

²⁵Jesus also did so many other things that if people wrote down every one of them, I suppose that the whole world would not even be big enough to contain the books that those people would write about them.

Acts

Chapter 1

¹Dear Theophilus,

In the first book that I wrote for you, I told about many of Jesus' actions and teachings. ²{I told you about those things} up to the moment when God took Jesus up to heaven. Before Jesus went to heaven, he gave instructions to his chosen Representatives as the Holy Spirit guided him. ³Even though the Romans executed Jesus on a cross, God made him alive again. Jesus then went to his Representatives {and other disciples} and proved to them in many convincing ways that he truly was alive again. He met with them at different times over a period of 40 days. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere.

⁴One time while Jesus was with his disciples, he told them, "I want you to stay here in the city of Jerusalem and wait until God our Father sends his Spirit to you. As I told you, he promised that he would do that. ⁵John baptized people in water, but within a few days God is going to baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

⁶One day when the Representatives were meeting together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become our king so that we Israelite people will have our own king once again?" ⁷He replied to them, "You do not need to know when that will happen. God my Father alone has decided {when he will make me king}." ⁸But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, he will enable you to tell people about me powerfully. You will do this here in the city of Jerusalem. You will do it in the nearby regions of Judea and Samaria. But you will also do it all over the world. ⁹After he said that, he started to rise up {into heaven} while they watched. But then a cloud blocked their view so that they could no longer see him.

¹⁰While they were still staring toward the sky as Jesus was going up, suddenly two angels in human form stood beside them. Their clothes shone brightly. ¹¹One of the angels said, "You men who come from Galilee, you do not need to look up at the sky any longer! Someday this same Jesus, whom God took from you up into heaven, will come back {to earth}. He will return in the same way that you just now saw him go up to heaven."

¹²Then {after the two angels left}, the Representatives returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. ¹³After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room {in the house} where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew. They also included another man named James, who was the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, who was the son of yet another man named James. ¹⁴All these men prayed together regularly and frequently. Others who prayed with them included the women who had traveled with Jesus; Mary, who was Jesus' mother; and his younger brothers.

¹⁵Now about 120 people were meeting together at that place. At one of the meetings, Peter stood up among his fellow believers {because he was going to say something important}. He said, ¹⁶"You who believe as I do, there are words that King David wrote in the Scriptures long ago that had to happen as he said they would. The Holy Spirit, who knew that Judas would show Jesus' enemies where to find him and arrest him, inspired David to write those words. ¹⁷But Jesus had chosen Judas, along with the rest of us, to represent him. {So we need to find someone else to take his place.}"

¹⁸This is how Judas died. The Jewish leaders gave Judas money for betraying Jesus. He used that money to buy a field{and he went to that field to kill himself because he felt so badly about what he had done to Jesus}. He fell down onto that field from a high place and landed with such force that his abdomen burst open, and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹The news about this spread widely among the people of Jerusalem. When they heard about

it, they gave that field a new name. In their Aramaic language it was Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood." {They gave it that name because it was where someone had died.}

²⁰Peter also said, "What happened to Judas is like what we read in the book of Psalms: 'May his home become empty, with no one living in it.' These other words in the Psalms also refer to him: 'Let someone else take over his work as a leader.'"

²¹"So we need to identify all the men who were with us during the whole time when the Lord Jesus was with us.

²²{They need to have been with us} from the time when John the Baptizer began his work until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. One such man must {replace Judas and} join us in telling people about Jesus and how God caused him to live again after he died."

²³So the people who were meeting together suggested two men who could replace Judas. One man was Joseph the son of Sabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias. ²⁴⁻²⁵Then they prayed: "Lord Jesus, Judas stopped representing you as he should have. He has now gone to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every person thinks privately. So please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas as your Representative." ²⁶Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them. The lot indicated that Matthias was the one to replace Judas. So he became a Representative along with the 11 others.

Chapter 2

¹On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place {in the city of Jerusalem}. ²Suddenly, they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a wind blowing loudly. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise. ³Then they saw what looked like burning flames. These flames separated from one another and came to rest on each of the believers. ⁴Then the Holy Spirit empowered all of the believers. They began to speak in languages they had never learned. The Spirit was making it possible for them to do that fluently.

⁵At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem {to celebrate the Pentecost festival}. They were Jewish people who sincerely worshiped God. They had come from many different countries around the world. ⁶When they heard this loud noise, a large crowd {of these Jews} gathered {at the place where the believers were}. The people in the crowd were amazed because they were each hearing the believers speak in their own languages. ⁷They were all completely amazed, and they said to each other, "Listen, all these people who are speaking have come from Galilee. {So they cannot possibly know our languages!} ⁸But all of us hear them speaking our own native languages! ⁹Some of us are people from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam. Others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. ¹⁰There are some people here from the regions of Phrygia and Pamphylia, from the country of Egypt, and from the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome. ¹¹They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who have chosen to believe and practice what Jews believe. And others of us are from the island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. And yet we can hear these people speaking in all our different languages about the mighty works that God has done!" ¹²The people wondered {about what was happening} and did not know what to think {about it}. So they asked one another, "What is happening here?" ¹³But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, "{These people are talking like this because} they have drunk too much wine!"

¹⁴In response, Peter stood up with all the other Representatives and spoke loudly to the crowd of people. He said, "You Jewish people and all of you others who live here in Jerusalem, listen to me and I will explain to you what is happening! ¹⁵Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning{, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day}! ¹⁶Instead, what has happened to us is the {miraculous} thing that the prophet Joel wrote about {long ago}. He wrote: ¹⁷

'During the last days,' God says, 'I will give my Holy Spirit to all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will tell people my messages. I will give visions to the young men, and I will give inspired dreams to the old men. ¹⁸During

those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, both men and women, so they can tell people my messages. ¹⁹I will cause things to happen in the sky that will make people marvel. I will cause things to happen on the earth that will show that great events are going to take place. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke everywhere. ²⁰In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things will happen before the momentous time when I, the Lord God, come to judge everyone. ²¹But even though I am coming to judge and punish sin, I will save all those who repent and ask me to forgive their sins.”

²²{Peter continued speaking. He said,} “You Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you, God proved to you that he had sent him by enabling him to do many amazing miracles. These showed that he was from God. You yourselves know that this is true. ²³Even though you knew that, you urged people who do not obey God’s law to take action to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. However, God had already planned for that to happen, and he knew what the results would be, so he allowed it. ²⁴Jesus died, but God caused him to become alive again and no longer dead, because it was not possible for him to stay dead.

²⁵Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said:

‘I knew that you, Lord God, would always be there to protect me. You are right beside me, so I will not be afraid of those who want to harm me. ²⁶Because of that, I am happy, and I joyfully praise you, O God. And I am completely confident {that you will cause me to become alive again after I die}. ²⁷I am confident because I know that you will not make me remain in the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because you have chosen me for a special purpose. ²⁸You have shown me how to live again. You will make me very happy because you will be with me {forever}.”

²⁹{Peter continued,} “You who are Jews like me, I can tell you confidently that our ancient ruler, King David, died and that his subjects buried him. In fact, his body is still here now at the place where they buried him. ³⁰So we know that King David was not talking about himself in this psalm. Instead, he was a prophet, and he knew that God promised to him that one of his descendants would become king after him. ³¹A long time ago, David knew what God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died. God would not allow him to remain in a grave. God would not even let him be dead long enough for his body to begin to decompose.

³²After this man Jesus had died, God made him alive again. All of us who are standing here before you can testify to this. {We all saw him alive after he had died.} ³³So we are not babbling drunkenly. Instead, this is what has happened. God has greatly honored Jesus by causing Jesus to rule where God himself is, in heaven. Jesus has received the Holy Spirit from God his Father, just as God promised. And now Jesus has generously given us the Holy Spirit, and God has confirmed that gift by doing this miracle that you are witnessing. ³⁴We know that David was not speaking about himself, because David did not go up into heaven {as Jesus did}. Besides that, David himself said this about the Messiah:

‘The Lord God said to my Lord the Messiah, “I will honor you by giving you a position next to me ³⁵while I completely defeat your enemies.””

³⁶{Peter ended by saying,} “So I want every Israelite to know definitely that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed.”

³⁷When the people heard what Peter said, they knew they had done wrong. The people asked him and the other Representatives, “Can you men tell us what God wants us to do?”

³⁸Peter answered them, “Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you now believe in what Jesus, the Messiah, has done for you, we will baptize you, showing that God has forgiven your sins, and he will give you his Holy Spirit. ³⁹You will receive the Holy Spirit because God has promised to give him to you and to your children and to all others whom the God we worship leads to have faith in Jesus. That includes all those who live far away from here.” ⁴⁰Peter said many more things and spoke strongly to them. He told them, “Ask God to save you so that he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people {who have rejected Jesus}!”

⁴¹So the people who believed Peter's message received baptism. There were about 3,000 of them who joined the group of believers that day. ⁴²They continually obeyed what the Representatives taught. They met many times together with the other believers, and they ate a meal and prayed together every day.

⁴³Throughout Jerusalem people came to have a great awe for God, because the Representatives were doing many kinds of miraculous deeds. ⁴⁴All of those who believed in Jesus met regularly together. They also kept sharing what they had with one another. ⁴⁵From time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they owned. They did this so that they could give some of the money they made to other believers. They gave those believers as much as they needed. ⁴⁶Every day they kept gathering to worship together in the temple courtyard, and then they would have meals together in their homes. They ate together happily and with genuine affection. ⁴⁷As they did so, they kept praising God, and the other people who lived in Jerusalem greatly respected them. {As those things were happening,} every day the Lord Jesus saved more people and those people joined with the other believers.

Chapter 3

¹One day Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, the time when people prayed there. ²There was a man there who had not been able to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the Beautiful Gate at the entrance to the temple area. People carried him there every day so that he could ask those who were going into the temple area to give him some money.

³As Peter and John were approaching that gate, he saw them and asked them to give him some money. ⁴When they heard the man speak to them, Peter and John looked directly at him, and Peter said to him, "Look at us!" ⁵So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some money from them. ⁶Then Peter said to him, "I do not have any money, but I will do what I can do for you. I heal you by the power of Jesus the Messiah, that man who came from the city of Nazareth. So get up and walk!" ⁷Then Peter grasped the man's right hand and helped him to stand up. The man realized immediately that his feet and ankles were going to be strong enough to support him. ⁸So the man jumped {the rest of the way} up {by himself} and started walking! He went into the temple area with Peter and John, leaping for joy and praising God as he walked!

⁹All the people who were there saw him walking and heard him praising God. ¹⁰They recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate that led into the temple area and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed that he could now walk. ¹¹The man would not let go of Peter and John. The three of them were in Solomon's Porch{, a covered walkway within the temple area}. As the amazing news of the man's healing spread through the crowd, more and more people came running over to see them.

¹²When Peter saw that a crowd was gathering around them, he said to the people, "You Israelites, it should not surprise you that this man can now walk. But you should not be looking at us as if we were so godly that we made him walk by our own power! ¹³{Let me tell you what has really happened.} God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We Israelites are descendants of those men, so the covenant includes us. God honored that covenant by sending Jesus to be the Messiah. {We told this man that the power of Jesus could heal him, and} God has now glorified Jesus by doing this miracle. But when Jesus was living among us, you turned him over to the Romans for trial. Pilate, the Roman governor, {knew that Jesus was innocent and} wanted to set him free. But you gathered in front of Pilate and shouted that he should not release him. ¹⁴Rather than have Pilate release Jesus to you, even though Jesus was the Messiah, you rejected him and asked Pilate to set free a killer instead! ¹⁵So you are responsible for the death of Jesus, the one who gives people life. But God brought him back to life after he died. We can testify that we saw Jesus many times after he became alive again. ¹⁶You recognize this man whom you see standing here. {He is the man who used to beg for alms at the Beautiful Gate.} He is now strong enough to stand on his own because he believed in what Jesus could do. Yes, it is because he trusted in Jesus that he is now completely healthy. All of you saw this happen.

¹⁷Now, my countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the Messiah. ¹⁸God said through the prophets ahead of time that the Messiah he would send would suffer and die. And now, by what has happened, he has fulfilled what the prophets said. ¹⁹So stop living sinful lives and ask God to help you do what pleases him. Then God will completely forgive you for sinning against him. ²⁰If you do that, there will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will send back to earth the Messiah whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. ²¹Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when God causes all that he created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to tell that to people. ²²For example, {the prophet} Moses said this {about the Messiah}: 'The Lord our God will make one of you Israelites a prophet like me. You must do everything he tells you to do. ²³Those who do not do what that prophet tells them will no longer belong to God's people. God will destroy them.'" ²⁴{Peter continued,} "In fact, all the prophets have told about what would happen during the times we are now living in. Those prophets include Samuel and the ones who lived after him, who all spoke about these events before they happened. ²⁵What the prophets said long ago applies to you today. And the solemn agreement that God made to bless our ancestors also extends to you, their descendants. He said to Abraham {about the Messiah}, 'I will bless all the people groups on the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.' ²⁶So when God sent Jesus to the earth as the Messiah, he had him come to you Israelites first. God intended for the Messiah to bless you by getting you to stop doing things that were wrong."

Chapter 4

¹While Peter and John were still speaking to the people, several men walked up and confronted them. They included priests who served in the temple, the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the Sadducee group. ²These men were very angry because these two men were teaching the people. They were telling the people that what God did for Jesus shows that God causes people to live again after they die. ³So these men arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. They did this because it was already evening, and the Jewish council would have to wait until the next day to question them. ⁴However, many people who had heard Peter speak put their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about 5,000.

⁵The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members of the Jewish council. They all assembled in one place in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas, the former high priest, was there. Caiaphas, the new high priest, was also there. And so were John and Alexander and other men who were related to the high priest. ⁷They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and John, "Who gave you the right or the ability to do this?"

⁸As the Holy Spirit gave him power, Peter said to them in response, "You fellow Israelites who rule us and all of you elders, listen to me! ⁹Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk. You want to know how he became able to walk. ¹⁰So we want this whole council and all the other Israelites to know what has happened. This man is able to stand before you because Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah, healed him. You were responsible for the Romans executing Jesus by nailing him to a cross. But God brought Jesus back to life after they executed him.

¹¹Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth is the one of whom the Scriptures say,

'The stone that the builders threw away has become the most important stone in the building.'

And you are those builders{, because you rejected Jesus}. ¹²{So you should no longer reject him, because} only Jesus can save us. For God has given us no other person in the world who can save us {from the guilt of our sins}!"

¹³The Jewish leaders recognized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also realized that these two men were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had

spent time with Jesus. ¹⁴They also saw the man who had become able to walk again standing there with Peter and John. So they were not able to say anything to contradict them.

¹⁵The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and this man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other {about Peter and John}. ¹⁶They said, "There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! The news of the amazing miracle that they have done has spread widely in Jerusalem. So we cannot tell people that it did not happen! ¹⁷However, we must not allow any more people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man." ¹⁸So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring them into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they were completely forbidden to speak or teach about Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John told them in response, "In order to obey your command, we would have to disobey God{, who commanded us to tell everyone about Jesus}. We will let you decide whether you think God would want us to obey you instead of him. ²⁰But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about what we saw Jesus do and what we heard him teach."

²¹Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them. But then they let them go without punishing them. The leaders knew that throughout Jerusalem people were praising God for what had happened {to the man who could not walk, and they did not want to upset the people}. ²²The people were praising God because {this was a remarkable miracle}. The man whom Peter and John had healed by doing this miracle was over forty years old, {and he had never before walked in his life}.

²³After Peter and John left the council, they met with the others who believed in Jesus and told them everything that the people on the ruling council had said to them. ²⁴When the others who believed in Jesus heard this, they prayed together aloud to God, "O Lord! You made the sky, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. ²⁵Your Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

'Why did the people groups of the world become angry

and why did they plan uselessly {against God}?

²⁶The kings in the world prepared to fight,

and the rulers joined with them

to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.'

²⁷What David said is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with people who were Israelites and people who were not, joined together in this city of Jerusalem to oppose Jesus. They opposed him even though he had done nothing wrong and even though you, God, had sent him as the Messiah. ²⁸{But when they opposed Jesus,} they did no more than you allowed because it was what you had decided long ago would happen. ²⁹So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus without being afraid at all! ³⁰Use your power to do great healings and many other miraculous deeds that will show the authority you have given to Jesus, your chosen Messiah!"

³¹When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting started to shake. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to tell people about Jesus as God had commanded, and they did that with great courage.

³²Those in the group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they believed and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he was the sole owner of anything. Instead, they shared what they had with one another. ³³The Representatives continued to preach powerfully that God had caused the Lord Jesus to live again after he died. And God was helping all the believers very much. ³⁴Here is one way God was helping them. No one among the believers was lacking anything. This was because other believers who owned fields or houses

would sell some of their property to help them. They would bring the proceeds from the sale³⁵ and they would give it to the Representatives, who would then give out the money to the believers who needed it.

³⁶Now there was a man named Joseph who belonged to the tribe of Levi and who came from the island of Cyprus. The Representatives called him Barnabas. In the language of the Jews, that name means a person who always encourages others. ³⁷Barnabas sold a field that belonged to him, and he brought the money to the Representatives {for them to give to other believers}.

Chapter 5

¹Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias. He was married, and his wife's name was Sapphira. They also sold some land. ²He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land. His wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and gave it to the Representatives.

³Then Peter said, "Ananias, you have allowed Satan to control you so completely that you tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. You kept for yourself some of the money you received for selling the land. {You did not give us all of it.}

⁴Before you sold that land, you truly owned it. And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So you should never have thought about doing such a wicked thing. You were not just trying to deceive people! No, you were trying to deceive God himself!" ⁵When Ananias heard the things Peter told him, he immediately fell down dead. And everyone who learned {about Ananias' death} felt a great awe for God. ⁶When Ananias died, some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out and buried it.

⁷About three hours later, his wife came in. But she did not know that Peter confronted her husband about the lie they had told and that her husband had died as a result. ⁸Then Peter showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, "Tell me, is this the amount of money you two received for the land you sold?" She said, "Yes, that is what we received." ⁹So Peter said to her, "You both did a terrible thing when you agreed to try to deceive the Holy Spirit! This is what will happen to you as a result. {God struck your husband dead as a punishment and} some young men are just coming back from burying him. God is also going to strike you dead, and they will take your body out and bury it as well." ¹⁰Immediately Sapphira fell down dead right in front of Peter. Just then the young men came back in. When they saw that she had also died, they carried her body out and buried it next to her husband's body.

¹¹All the believers in Jerusalem felt a great awe for God because of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Everyone else who heard about these things also felt great awe for God.

¹²God was enabling the Representatives to do many amazing miracles {that showed the truth of what they were preaching} among the people. All the believers were meeting together regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon's Porch. ¹³All of the other people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to meet with the believers. However, those people continued to speak very highly of them. ¹⁴Many more men and women started believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. ¹⁵Because the people were seeing such amazing miracles, they started bringing those who had various diseases right into the streets and placing them on stretchers and mattresses there. They were hoping that when Peter walked by his shadow might touch some of them, because if even that happened, God would heal them. ¹⁶Large crowds of people were also coming from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing those who had various diseases and those whom evil spirits were tormenting, and God healed all of them.

¹⁷However, the high priest became very resentful {that such large crowds were coming to the Representatives}. Many priests who were members of the Sadducee group were also very resentful of them. They joined together with the high priest to work against them. ¹⁸So they commanded the temple guards to arrest them and to put them in the public jail. ¹⁹{The high priest and his allies kept them in jail overnight so that they could question them in the morning.} But that night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and led all the Representatives outside. Then the angel told them, ²⁰"Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people about the

eternal life that Jesus can give them. Do not leave anything out, even though the Sanhedrin has commanded you not to say certain things.”²¹ So when the Representatives heard what the angel said, they went to the temple courtyard and began to teach the people once more about Jesus. By then it was about dawn. Around that same time, the high priest and the other priests who were working with him gathered together in the Jewish council chamber. From there they summoned the other council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. Once the whole council was present, they sent guards to the jail to get the Representatives.²² But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that they were not there. So they returned to the council and told the members,²³ “We saw that the jail doors were very safely locked and that the guards were keeping watch in front of the doors. But when we opened the doors {and went in to get those men}, none of them were inside the jail.”²⁴ When the chief priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards heard that, they were greatly confused. They wondered what the consequences would be.

²⁵ Then someone came and reported to them, “Listen to this! The men you put in jail have somehow gotten into the temple courtyard. And they are telling the people there about Jesus!”²⁶ So the officer in charge of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers. They brought the Representatives back {to the council room}. But they did not treat them roughly. They were afraid that if they did that, the people would try to kill them by throwing stones at them.

²⁷ After the captain and his officers had brought the Representatives to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members. Then the high priest questioned them intensely.²⁸ He said to them, “We ordered you very clearly not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty of that man’s death!”²⁹ But Peter, speaking for himself and the other Representatives, replied, “We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do!”³⁰ You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to live again after he died.³¹ God has honored Jesus more than he has honored anyone else. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has enabled us Israelites to stop sinning and he has forgiven us for the sins we committed.³² We tell people about these things that we saw happen to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true.”³³ When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they became so angry {with the Representatives} that they wanted to kill them.

³⁴ But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught the Jewish laws, and the Jewish people respected him highly. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the Representatives out of the room for a short time.³⁵ {After the guards had taken them out,} Gamaliel said to the other council members, “You leaders of the people of Israel, you must think carefully about what you are going to do to these men.”³⁶ Some years ago a man named Theudas led a revolt against the government. He claimed that he was a great man, and about 400 men joined him. But the Romans captured and executed him, and all those who had joined him went back to where they came from. So this revolt did not succeed.³⁷ After that, during the time when the Romans were recording the names of people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled. He convinced some people to rebel with him. But he too died, and all those who had joined him went off in different directions.³⁸ Based on these examples, let me offer some advice. Do not kill these men! Set them free! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail.³⁹ But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them. You may even discover that you are working against God!” The other members of the council accepted what Gamaliel said.⁴⁰ They told the temple guards to bring in the Representatives and beat them. {So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them.} Then the council members commanded them not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they let them go.

⁴¹ So they left the council chamber. As they did, they even rejoiced that God had honored them by allowing people to treat them badly because they were testifying to Jesus.⁴² Every day after that, they went to the temple area and to various people’s houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them that Jesus is the Messiah.

Chapter 6

¹During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The Greek-speaking Jews began to complain about the Aramaic-speaking Jews because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

²So {after} the twelve Representatives {had heard what they were saying, they} summoned all the other believers {in Jerusalem} to meet together. Then they said to them, "We would not be doing the right thing if we stopped telling people the message God told us to share about Jesus in order to distribute food to people! ³So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. ⁴As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to proclaim the news about Jesus."

⁵All of the disciples liked their suggestion. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas was a former Gentile who had converted to the Jewish religion. ⁶The believers brought these seven men to the Representatives, who prayed for those men. As they prayed, they placed their hands on the men's heads to show that they approved of them to do that work.

⁷More and more people were hearing the news about Jesus. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were very many Jewish priests. They put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah and so they began to live in the way he said they should.

⁸God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people {that showed that the message about Jesus was true}. ⁹However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews who attended a synagogue that had the name Freedmen's Synagogue. Some other Jews also opposed Stephen. They were from the synagogues that people attended who were from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

¹¹So they secretly persuaded some men to accuse Stephen falsely. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." ¹²They also made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. They came up to Stephen, grabbed him, and took him to the Jewish council. ¹³They also brought in some people who told lies about Stephen. They said, "This man keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. ¹⁴What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy the temple here in Jerusalem and will tell us to obey different customs from the ones that Moses taught our ancestors."

¹⁵All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

¹Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" ²Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please listen to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our forefather Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran. ³God said to him, 'Leave this land where you and your relatives are living and go into the land to which I will direct you.' ⁴So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land where our people are now living.

⁵At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that later he would give this land to him and his descendants, and that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

⁶Later God told Abraham, 'Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four hundred years. During that time, the rulers will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves. ⁷But I will punish the people who make them work as slaves,' said God. 'After that, your descendants will leave that land, and they will come and worship me in this land.'

⁸Then God commanded that every male in Abraham's household and all of his male descendants should be circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham's son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob was the father of the 12 men whom we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

⁹You know that Jacob's older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So they sold him to merchants who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God took care of Joseph. ¹⁰God protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of Pharaoh's property.

¹¹{While Joseph was doing that work,} there was a time when there was very little food anywhere in Egypt and also in Canaan. People were suffering badly. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan could not find enough food to eat. ¹²When Jacob heard a report that there was grain in Egypt that people could buy, he sent Joseph's older brothers there to buy grain. {They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they returned home.} ¹³When Joseph's brothers went to Egypt again, they bought grain from Joseph once more. But this time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh found out that these men who had come from Canaan were Joseph's brothers. ¹⁴Joseph sent his brothers back home to tell their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob's family consisted of 75 people. ¹⁵So when Jacob heard that, he and all his family went to live in Egypt. {Later on,} Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died there. ¹⁶Their descendants brought their bodies back to our land and buried them in the tomb that Abraham bought from Hamor's sons in the city of Shechem.

¹⁷Our ancestors had become very numerous by the time God was about to rescue them from Egypt. That is what God had promised Abraham he would do. ¹⁸Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph had greatly helped the people of Egypt {long before his own time}. ¹⁹That king tried to get rid of our ancestors in cruel ways. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to abandon their newborn babies outside their homes so that the babies would die.

²⁰During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. His parents secretly cared for him in their house for three months. ²¹Then they had to abandon him outside the house. But Pharaoh's daughter found him and cared for him as her own son. ²²The Egyptians taught Moses the many things that they had learned. When he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

²³One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided to see how his relatives, the people of Israel, were doing. ²⁴He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man. He avenged him by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵Moses expected that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. ²⁶The next day, Moses saw two of his fellow Israelites fighting each other. He tried to make them stop by saying to them, 'Now you two are both Israelites! You must stop hurting each other!' ²⁷But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away. He said to him, 'You have no authority over us! ²⁸You probably want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday!' ²⁹When Moses heard that, he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian. He lived there for some years. {He got married, and} he {and his wife} had two sons.

³⁰One day forty years later, the Lord God came to Moses in the form of an angel. This was in the desert near Mount Sinai. He appeared in the flames of a bush that was on fire. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed because the bush was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, ³²'I am the God whom your ancestors worshiped. I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.' Moses was so afraid that he

began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. ³³Then the Lord God said to him, 'Take your sandals off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. ³⁴I have seen clearly how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when they groan because of it. So I am taking action to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to send you back to Egypt.'

³⁵This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people. But they rejected him by saying, 'You have no authority over us!' Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He did that with the help of the angel who spoke to him from the bush. ³⁶Moses is the one who led our ancestors out from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the Israelite people lived in the wilderness. ³⁷This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, 'God will cause another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.' ³⁸It was this man Moses who was among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness. God spoke through the angel on Mount Sinai to give Moses our laws. Moses was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one to whom God gave commandments and who passed them on to us. Those commandments are still powerful today.

³⁹However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to return to Egypt. ⁴⁰So they told his older brother Aaron, 'Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!' ⁴¹When the Israelites rejected Moses, they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol. They sang and danced to worship something that they themselves had made. ⁴²So God stopped correcting them. He left them to worship the stars in the sky. This agrees with what one of the prophets wrote:

God said, 'You Israelite people repeatedly killed animals and offered them to me with grain as sacrifices during those forty years that you were in the wilderness. But you certainly were not truly offering them to me!

⁴³On the contrary, you carried with you the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and you worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from your homes to regions even farther than the country of Babylon.'

⁴⁴While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. ⁴⁵Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time when they took this land for themselves, when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The tent remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. ⁴⁶David pleased God, and he asked God to let him build a temple where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. ⁴⁷But instead, God told David's son Solomon to build a temple where people could worship him.

⁴⁸However, we know that God, who is greater than everything, does not live in temples that people build. It is as the prophet Isaiah wrote:

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰God said, 'I created everything in heaven and on earth. My presence fills all of creation. So you human beings cannot make a place good enough for me to live in!'

⁵¹You people are disobedient to God, as if you did not even know God! You are exactly like your ancestors! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! ⁵²Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed those who long ago announced that the Messiah would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the Messiah has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him!

⁵³You are the people who have received God's laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!"

⁵⁴When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

⁵⁵But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see right into heaven, and I see the Son of Man {in human form} standing where God rules!"

⁵⁷{When the Jewish council members and others heard that,} they shouted loudly. They put their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him. All together they ran up to Stephen and grabbed him. ⁵⁸They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw stones at him to kill him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in order to throw stones more easily. They put these garments on the ground next to a young man whose name was Saul so that he could guard them. ⁵⁹While they continued to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen prayed out loud, "Lord Jesus, welcome me when I die!"

⁶⁰Then Stephen knelt down and cried out loud, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!" After he had said this, he died.

Chapter 8

¹⁻²Then some men who honored God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they mourned loudly for him.

But Saul thought the Sanhedrin had done the right thing by stoning Stephen. On that same day, people {Saul was leading} started severely persecuting the believers who were living in Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. But the apostles remained in Jerusalem. ³Saul began trying to destroy the group of believers. He entered their houses one by one. He dragged away men and women {who believed in Jesus}, and he put them in prison.

⁴The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued preaching the message about Jesus. ⁵One of those believers, whose name was Philip, went from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is the Messiah. ⁶Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he was doing. So they all paid close attention to what he was saying. ⁷For example, Philip commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many people who could not move their muscles and many others who were lame were healed. ⁸So many people in that city were very happy.

⁹There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he was "Simon the Great One!" ¹⁰The people there, both ordinary and important people, listened to him. They were saying, "Simon is the Great Power of God." ¹¹They continued to listen to him carefully because for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. ¹²But then they believed Philip's message of the good news about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere and about Jesus the Messiah. Philip baptized the men and the women who believed in Jesus. ¹³Though the people had been worshiping him, Simon too believed Philip's message and received baptism. He began to accompany Philip constantly. He was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing. These things showed that Philip was speaking the truth.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God's message, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶For the Holy Spirit had not yet openly empowered any of them. They had only received baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸Simon saw that people received the Holy Spirit as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles. ¹⁹He said, "Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that if I place my

hands on someone, he will receive the Holy Spirit.” ²⁰But Peter said to him, “May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God’s gift with money! ²¹You cannot work with us in what we are doing, because you do not have the right attitude toward God! ²²So stop thinking wickedly like that! Plead with the Lord to forgive you for what you wanted to do, since he will forgive you if you ask sincerely. ²³You are in spiritual danger! I perceive that you are extremely jealous of us and that a continual desire to do evil is controlling you.” ²⁴Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!”

²⁵Peter and John then told the people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus. They shared the message of the Lord with them. Then they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way, they declared the good news about Jesus to people living in many towns in the district of Samaria.

²⁶While Peter and John were returning to Jerusalem, the Lord sent an angel to Philip. {Even though so many Samaritans were becoming believers in Jesus,} that angel told him, “Get ready and go south along the road that goes from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza.” That road is in a desert area. ²⁷So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man from the land of Ethiopia. The man was an important official of the queen of Ethiopia. In his language people called their queen the Kandake. He took care of all of her funds. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship God, ²⁸and he was returning home and was seated, riding in his carriage. As he was riding, he was reading aloud from what the prophet Isaiah had written.

²⁹God’s Spirit told Philip, “Go near to that carriage and keep walking close to it!” ³⁰So Philip ran over to the carriage. He heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. He asked the man, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He answered Philip, “No, I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me.” Then the man said to Philip, “Please come up and sit beside me.” {So Philip got into the carriage.} ³²The part of the Scriptures that the official was reading was this: “People will lead him away to kill him as they lead a sheep to the place where they are going to kill it. He will be silent, as a lamb stands silently while someone cuts off its wool.

³³People will humiliate him and condemn him unjustly. He will have no descendants because people will kill him before he can have children.”

³⁴The official asked Philip about what he was reading, “Tell me, who was the prophet writing about? Was he writing about himself, or about someone else?” ³⁵So Philip replied to him. He began with that Scripture passage, and he told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. Then the official said to Philip, “Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize me.” ³⁷^[1] [Philip said, “If you believe in Jesus with complete sincerity, God will save you, and you may be baptized.” The Ethiopian answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”] ³⁸So the official told the driver to stop the carriage. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. Even so, the official continued going very happily along the road.

⁴⁰Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus. While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the good news about Jesus in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. He was still proclaiming it when he finally arrived in Caesarea.

8:37 ^[1]

Chapter 9

¹Meanwhile, Saul continued angrily threatening to kill those who believed in the Lord Jesus. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem ²and requested him to write letters introducing Saul to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in the city of Damascus. The letters would ask them to give Saul the authority to seize any man or woman who

followed the teachings of Jesus and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. {There the Jewish leaders could judge and punish them. The high priest gave Saul the letters he asked for.}

³While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus. Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. ⁴Immediately he fell onto the ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, stop trying to hurt me!" ⁵Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are hurting. ⁶Now stand up and go into the city of Damascus! Someone there will tell you what I want you to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not say anything. They just stood there. This was because they heard someone speaking, but they did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could not see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹For the next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a man who believed in Jesus named Ananias. Jesus made him see a vision and in it he called to him, "Ananias!" Ananias replied, "Lord, I am listening." ¹¹Jesus told him, "Go to Straight Street, to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone there if you can talk to a man named Saul who is from the city of Tarsus. Saul is praying to me at this moment. ¹²Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house where he was staying and put his hands on him to restore his sight." ¹³Ananias answered, "But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many bad things to the people in Jerusalem who believe in you! ¹⁴The chief priests have given him permission to come here to Damascus and take prisoner all those who believe in you!" ¹⁵But Jesus told Ananias, "Go visit Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me. I want him to speak about me to non-Jewish people and their leaders and to the Israelite people. ¹⁶I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me." ¹⁷So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, "Saul, you are already like a brother to me. Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. Jesus is the one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you to restore your sight, and he wants the Holy Spirit to lead and empower you." ¹⁸Instantly, what seemed like flakes fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

²⁰Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told the people there that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹The people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, "We can hardly believe that this is the same man who persecuted the believers in Jerusalem! And he came here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!" ²²But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jewish leaders in Damascus became angry {because they could not disprove what he said}.

²³Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. ²⁴Those Jewish leaders were continually watching the people passing through the city gates so that if they saw Saul there, they could kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. ²⁵So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

²⁶When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the other believers there. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him. They were not convinced that he had become a believer. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen Jesus, who had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. ²⁸So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem. He spoke boldly to the people there about Jesus.

²⁹Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. {They could not answer his arguments,} so they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. ³⁰But the other believers found out that the Jews who spoke Greek were planning to kill Saul. So some of them took him to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship that was going to Tarsus, his hometown.

³¹Since no one was persecuting them anymore, the believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were able to live peacefully. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were honoring the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was leading many other people to become believers.

³²{Those peaceful conditions allowed} Peter to travel throughout those regions. Once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. ³³There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas was not able to walk or stand, and so he had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah heals you! Get up and roll up your own mat!" Right away Aeneas stood up. ³⁵Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on the Plain of Sharon saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

³⁶In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. ³⁷During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body {according to the Jewish custom}. Then they {covered her body with cloth and} placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

³⁸Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, "Please come immediately with us to Joppa!"

³⁹Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where the body of Dorcas was lying. All the widows there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. ⁴⁰But Peter sent them all out of the room {so that he could pray}. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹He grasped one of her hands and helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. ⁴²Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle and, as a result, many people believed in Jesus. ⁴³Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon, who made leather from animal skins.

Chapter 10

¹There was a man whose name was Cornelius who lived in the city of Caesarea. He was an officer who commanded 100 men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. ²He continually tried to do what would please God. He and his entire household were non-Jews who worshiped God. He often gave money to help poor Jewish people. He prayed to God regularly.

³One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon, Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" ⁴Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel answered him, "You have been praying regularly to God. You often give money to help poor people. Those things have been like an offering to God, and he has noticed them. ⁵So now command some men to go to Joppa. Tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. ⁶He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." ⁷When the angel who was speaking with Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. ⁸He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to the city of Joppa and ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

⁹About noon the next day, those three men were traveling along the road. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. ¹⁰Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, he saw a vision. ¹¹He saw an opening in the sky through which something like a large, square piece of cloth was coming down. Someone seemed to be lowering it by its four corners to the ground.

¹²Inside the sheet were many different kinds of creatures. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. ¹³Then he heard

God say to him, "Go ahead, Peter, kill some of these and eat them." ¹⁴But Peter replied, "Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our Jewish law says is unacceptable to you or that we must not eat!" ¹⁵Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, "I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say that it is not acceptable to eat!" ¹⁶This happened three times. Right after that, the sheet with the animals and birds went back up into the sky.

¹⁷This left Peter trying to understand what that vision meant. Meanwhile, the men Cornelius had sent arrived in Joppa. They asked people how to get to Simon's house. When people told them, they found the house and stood outside the gate. ¹⁸They called from the gate and asked if a man whose name was Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Listen! Three men are here who want you to go with them. ²⁰So do not be reluctant. Go downstairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!" ²¹So Peter went down to the men and said to them, "Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?" ²²They replied, "Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God. All of the Jewish people who know about him speak well of him. An angel from God told Cornelius, 'Have some men to go to Joppa and get Simon Peter. Bring him to your house and listen to what he has to say.'" ²³So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. ²⁴The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. ²⁵When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. ²⁶But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, "Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!"

²⁷While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter {and the others} entered the house. They saw that Cornelius had invited many people to come {and hear Peter}. ²⁸Then Peter said to them, "You all know that we Jews think we are disobeying our laws if we associate with people who are not Jews or visit them in their homes. However, God has shown me {in a vision} that I should not say that God only accepts people who are Jews. ²⁹So when you sent some men to ask me to come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?"

³⁰Cornelius replied, "About this time three days ago, I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me ³¹and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that. ³²So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon, whose other name is Peter, to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.' ³³So I sent some men right away to ask you to come here. I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us. We want to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us."

³⁴So Peter began to speak to them. He said, "Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. ³⁵Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. ³⁶You know what God told us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that people could live peacefully with him because of what Jesus the Messiah has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. ³⁷You know what Jesus did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He started to do those things after John proclaimed to people that they should stop their sinful behavior. If they did, John baptized them. ³⁸You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, doing good deeds. Whenever he met people whom the devil was causing to suffer, he healed them. It was God who enabled Jesus to do those things."

³⁹"We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the land of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross. ⁴⁰Jesus died on a Friday, but God brought him back to life that

Sunday. God made sure that many people would see that he was certainly alive again. ⁴¹At that time God did not let everyone see him. God had previously chosen some people to be witnesses that Jesus was alive. I am one of the people who saw him and even ate meals together with him just after God brought him back to life. ⁴²Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and tell them that God has chosen him to judge everyone one day. He will judge those who are still alive and those who have died before that day. ⁴³All the prophets who wrote about him long ago told the people about him. They wrote that if anyone believed in him, God would forgive whatever sins they had done, because of what this man, Jesus, would do for them."

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking about Jesus, suddenly the Holy Spirit came to all those people from other nations who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵The Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had so kindly given the Holy Spirit to people from all different nations too. ⁴⁶The Jewish believers knew that God had done that because they were hearing those people speak in other languages to tell how great God is. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷{to the other Jewish believers who were there}, "God has given them the Holy Spirit just as he gave him to us Jewish believers. Surely all of you would agree that we should baptize these people!" ⁴⁸Then Peter told Cornelius and his guests that they should receive baptism as believers in Jesus the Messiah. {Peter and the believers who had come with him from Joppa baptized all of them.} After they had received baptism, Cornelius invited Peter to stay with them for several days. {So he and the other Jewish believers did that.}

Chapter 11

¹The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea heard that some non-Jewish people had also believed the message of God about Jesus. ²But there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who {followed the teaching of the Pharisees and} believed that Jews should not associate with non-Jews. When Peter came back from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him. ³They said to him, "Not only was it wrong for you to go into the home of someone who was not Jewish, you even ate there!"

⁴So Peter told them exactly what had happened. ⁵He said, "I was praying {by myself} in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, suspended by its four corners. It came down to where I was. ⁶As I was gazing at it, I looked closely and I saw some tame animals and also some wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. ⁷Then I heard a voice commanding me, 'Go ahead, Peter, kill some and eat them!' ⁸But I replied, 'Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our laws say we must not eat!' ⁹The voice spoke to me from heaven a second time: 'I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say it is unacceptable.' ¹⁰This same thing happened two more times. Then the sheet with all those animals and birds went back up into heaven.

¹¹At that exact moment, three men arrived at the house where I was staying. Their master had sent them to bring me to Caesarea. ¹²God's Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews. Six Jewish believers went with me to Caesarea. We went into the house of the man who had sent for me. ¹³He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring back Simon whose other name is Peter. ¹⁴He will tell you how God will save you and everyone else in your house.' ¹⁵While I was speaking to them, the Holy Spirit suddenly came to them just as he came to us during the Pentecost festival. ¹⁶Then I remembered what Jesus had said: 'John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷God gave us the Holy Spirit when we believed in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. God gave those non-Jews the same Holy Spirit. So I had to cooperate with what God was doing {and baptize them}."

¹⁸After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God. They said, "It is clear that God has accepted non-Jews so they too can have everlasting life if they turn from their sinful behavior."

¹⁹After Stephen died, people started persecuting the other believers in Jerusalem. So many of them left and went to other places. Some of them went to the land of Phoenicia. Some went to the island of Cyprus. Others went to the city of Antioch in Syria. In those places, they told people the good news about Jesus. But most of them told only

other Jewish people. ²⁰But some of the believers were men from the island of Cyprus and from the city of Cyrene in north Africa. They went to Antioch and also spoke with non-Jewish people, telling them that Jesus is the Messiah.

²¹The Lord God was powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in Jesus.

²²The group of believers in Jerusalem learned that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So they sent Barnabas to Antioch {to teach and encourage the new believers}. ²³When Barnabas got to Antioch, he recognized that God had acted kindly toward the people there. This made him very happy. He encouraged all of the new believers to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus completely. ²⁴Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely controlled. He trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many more people in Antioch believed in Jesus.

²⁵Then Barnabas left Antioch and went to the city of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia to look for Saul. ²⁶After Barnabas found Saul, he brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers there. Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there for a whole year. They taught large numbers of people about Jesus. The people of Antioch were the first people who called the disciples of Jesus "Christians."

²⁷During the time that Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch, some believers who were prophets came there from Jerusalem. ²⁸One of them whose name was Agabus stood up {in order to speak}. God's Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a severe shortage of food in many countries. (This shortage happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.) ²⁹{When the believers there heard what Agabus said,} they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give. ³⁰They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem.

Chapter 12

¹About this same time, King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. The king did that because he wanted to hurt the believers and their community. ²He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John. So the soldier did that. ³When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast. ⁴After the soldiers arrested Peter, they put him in prison. Herod assigned four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. {He then planned to execute Peter.}

⁵So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were urgently praying to God, asking him to help Peter. ⁶It was the night before Herod planned to bring Peter out of prison and have him executed publicly. Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers. A soldier on one side of him had locked a chain onto Peter's wrist and his own wrist. A soldier on the other side of Peter had done the same thing. Two more soldiers were guarding the prison doors. ⁷Suddenly, an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter. A bright light shone in his cell. {But Peter was still sleeping so soundly that} the angel poked him in the side to wake him up. The angel told him, "Get up quickly!" {While Peter was getting up,} the chains fell off from his wrists. {However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening.} ⁸Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt around you and tie your sandals onto your feet!" And Peter did what the angel told him to do. Then the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!" ⁹So Peter {put on his cloak and sandals and} followed the angel out of the prison cell. He had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming. ¹⁰Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate swung open for them, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared. ¹¹Then Peter finally realized that this was not a vision, it was really happening. So he thought, "Now I know that the Lord God truly sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen."

¹²When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John, whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow. ¹³When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl whose name was Rhoda came to find out who was outside the door. ¹⁴{When Peter responded,} she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she forgot to open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She told the other believers that Peter was standing outside the door. ¹⁵But they said to her, "You must be crazy!" But she continued to say that it was really true. They kept responding, "{No, it cannot be Peter.} It is probably his angel." ¹⁶But Peter kept knocking the whole time those inside were talking. So when some of them finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they could hardly believe it! ¹⁷Peter waved his hand to get them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had let him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

¹⁸The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter {saw that he was gone}. They wondered what had happened to him, and they became terribly upset. ¹⁹{Then Herod heard about it. So} he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then Herod questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter. {But the soldiers had no good explanation for what had happened.} So Herod commanded them to be executed{, which was how the Romans punished guards whose prisoners escaped}. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

²⁰King Herod became very upset with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. {He stopped them from trading with the people he ruled.} But the people of Tyre and Sidon needed to buy food from those regions. So they sent representatives together to the city of Caesarea to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that they wanted to live peacefully with him. ²¹On the day that Herod had planned to meet with the representatives of Tyre and Sidon{, he did some things to impress them}. He put on very expensive clothes and he sat on his royal throne. Then he formally addressed all the people who had gathered there. ²²Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "King Herod speaks so well that he must be a god, not a man!" ²³Herod accepted the praise of the people instead of telling them they should praise God. So while the people were still praising Herod, the Lord God sent an angel to punish him. That angel punished him severely: Worms ate him and he died.

²⁴The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

²⁵Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea. They returned to the city of Jerusalem. They brought John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

Chapter 13

¹At that time in the group of believers in the city of Antioch there were prophets and teachers. They were: Barnabas; Simeon, whose other name was Niger; Lucius, who was from the city of Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with Herod Antipas when he was the ruler of Galilee; and Saul. ²While the believers in Antioch were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them. He said, "I want you to let Barnabas and Saul serve me in a particular way. I want you to send them on a special mission that I have chosen them to do." ³So the believers fasted and prayed some more. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul {to show that they approved of them going on this special mission}. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

⁴The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went from Antioch to the city of Seleucia, which is by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the island of Cyprus. ⁵While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message God had told them to share about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

⁶The three of them crossed from one side of the island to the other {and shared the gospel message in each town they passed through}. Eventually they came to the city of Paphos. There they met a sorcerer whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. ⁷He was often in the company of the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was a sensible man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear what God had told them to say. ⁸However, Bar Jesus, who also called himself Elymas, contradicted what Barnabas and Paul were saying. (The name Elymas means “the Sorcerer.”) He kept trying to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. ⁹Saul was using his Roman name, Paul, because he was visiting a Roman official. The Holy Spirit gave Paul boldness and insight. He looked steadily at the sorcerer. ¹⁰Paul said, “You are constantly lying to people and doing things to deceive them! You are serving the devil! You try to stop everything that is good! You must stop trying to keep people from living in the way that God wants! ¹¹Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You will become blind and you will not even be able to see the sun until God decides to let you see again.” At once Elymas could no longer see clearly. Then he could not see at all. He wandered around, searching for someone to take him by the hand and lead him. ¹²When Sergius Paulus saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. The truth and power of what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about Jesus amazed him.

¹³After that, Paul and the people with him traveled by sailboat from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At Perga, John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. ¹⁴Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia {in the province of Galatia}. On the Sabbath, they entered the Jewish meeting place and sat down {as rabbis did}. ¹⁵Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the Law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written. Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas. They said, “Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now.”

¹⁶So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand {so that the people would listen to him}. Then he said, “Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! ¹⁷God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people. He caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things to lead them out of slavery there. ¹⁸He put up with their disobedience for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. ¹⁹He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan. He gave their land to the Israelites to live in. ²⁰The Israelites spent about 450 years in Egypt and in the wilderness.”

“After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. The prophet Samuel was the last of these judges to rule them. ²¹Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for 40 years. ²²After God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, ‘I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.’”

²³“God brought one of David’s descendants, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us. This is what he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. ²⁴Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. ²⁵When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he told the crowds, ‘Do not think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send, because I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I do not even deserve to be his slave and take the sandals off his feet.’”

²⁶“My fellow Israelites who are descendants of Abraham and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen! God has told all of us how he saves people. ²⁷The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They heard someone read from the writings of the prophets {in their synagogues} on every Sabbath day. {But they did not understand what the prophets were saying.} And so what the prophets predicted long ago came true when they condemned Jesus to death. ²⁸{Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things.} They could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die. But they still demanded that Pilate,

the governor, condemn him to death. ²⁹They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets had written long ago that people would do to him. {They killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross.} Then they took his body down from the cross and placed it in a tomb. ³⁰However, God brought him back to life after he was dead. ³¹For many days he repeatedly appeared to his disciples who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now."

³²"Right now we are proclaiming this good news to you. God made a promise to our Jewish ancestors. ³³God has kept that promise for us who are their descendants, and also for you who are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. It is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm{, when God was speaking about sending his Son}:

'You are my Son;

today I have become your Father.'

³⁴God has made the Messiah alive after he was dead, and God will never let him die again. God promised that to the Messiah when he said in the Scriptures,

'I will certainly help you, as I promised David that I would do.' ³⁵That is why, in another psalm, David also says:

'You, God, will not allow the body of your Messiah to decay.' ³⁶While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. Then when he died his body was buried where his ancestors' bodies had been buried. Then David's body decayed. {So he could not have been speaking about himself in this psalm.} ³⁷But God made Jesus alive again after he died, and his body did not decay."

³⁸"So, fellow Israelites and other friends, we want you to know that God is promising to forgive your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. You could not become right with God by obeying the laws that Moses wrote because there were many laws that you were not able to obey. ³⁹But now God declares that all people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that have displeased him. ⁴⁰So then be careful that God does not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do! ⁴¹{God said through the prophet Habakkuk,}

'You who ridicule me, you will certainly be amazed when you see what I am doing. Then you will be destroyed. You will be amazed because I will do something terrible to you while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even if someone told you!'"

⁴²After Paul finished speaking, and as he and Barnabas were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and speak to them about these things again. ⁴³When the meeting was over, many people became disciples of Jesus, as Paul and Barnabas had encouraged them to do. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them. They urged them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people's sins because of what Jesus did.

⁴⁴On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about Jesus. ⁴⁵The leaders of the Jews saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. This made them extremely jealous. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying. They also insulted him. ⁴⁶Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, "We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God's message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of everlasting life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God. ⁴⁷We are doing this because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. {He said in the Scriptures,} 'I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them.'"

⁴⁸When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they rejoiced. They praised God for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for everlasting life put their trust in Jesus. ⁴⁹At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

⁵⁰However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them. They also talked to the most important men in the city. The Jewish leaders persuaded the non-Jewish city leaders to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many citizens against Paul and Barnabas, and they made them leave their region. ⁵¹As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust off their feet. This was to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium. ⁵²Meanwhile, the people in Antioch who had believed in Jesus were very happy and the Holy Spirit was helping them greatly.

Chapter 14

¹At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place. There they spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, very many Jews and non-Jews believed in Jesus. ²But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They made some of the non-Jews angry and bitter toward the people who had put their trust in Jesus. ³But Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speaking boldly about Jesus. Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way, he showed people the truth of the message that God saves us even though we do not deserve it.

⁴The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with Paul and Barnabas. ⁵Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. ⁶But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan. They quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. ⁷While they were in that area, they continually told the people the good news about Jesus.

⁸In Lystra, they saw a man who was sitting down because he was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he had never been able to walk. ⁹He listened as Paul was speaking about Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that Jesus could make him well. ¹⁰So Paul shouted out to him, "Stand up straight!" When the man heard that, his legs became strong. He immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

¹¹When the crowd saw Paul heal the crippled man, {this made them think that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So} they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian language, "Look! The gods have made themselves look like people and they have come down from the sky to help us!" ¹²They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They believed this because Paul was the one who had been speaking. ¹³People worshiped Zeus at a temple just outside the gates of the city. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about that, they were very upset. They tore their own clothes {to show that they did not want the people to sacrifice to them}. They rushed among the people, shouting, ¹⁵"People of Lystra, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are human beings who are just the same as you! We have come to tell you some good news about the one true God. You can stop worshipping other so-called gods, because they cannot help you. This true God made the sky, the land, the oceans, and everything that lives in them. ¹⁶In the past, God allowed the non-Jewish people groups to worship whatever gods they wanted to worship. ¹⁷Even so, God showed you non-Jewish people that he is a good God. He sent rain to make your crops grow. He gave you plenty of food so that you could enjoy your lives." ¹⁸Paul and Barnabas said all these things to the people. Even so, it was very difficult for them to keep the people from sacrificing those bulls to worship them.

¹⁹Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and convinced many of the people of Lystra that Paul had not been telling them the truth. {The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul.} They let

those Jews throw stones at him until he fell to the ground. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there. ²⁰But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. Suddenly Paul stood up! He went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe. ²¹In the city of Derbe they spent several days telling the people about Jesus. Many people there became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back home. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium. Then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia. ²²In each place, they urged the believers to keep trusting Jesus. They told the believers, "We suffer many hardships in this world when we are allowing God to rule over us."

²³Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before they left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then they entrusted the leaders and other believers to Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

²⁴After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia.

²⁵In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga. They preached God's message about Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia. ²⁶There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. The people there had chosen Paul and Barnabas to go to other places and preach. That was where the believers had asked God to help Paul and Barnabas do the work that they had now completed.

²⁷When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus. ²⁸Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

Chapter 15

¹But then some Jewish believers from the province of Judea arrived in Antioch. They started telling the non-Jewish believers there, "You must receive circumcision {to show that you belong to God}, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, God will not save you." ²Paul and Barnabas had a big argument with those Jews. {They could not settle their disagreement,} so the believers at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to Jerusalem. That way they could discuss this issue with the apostles and other leaders there.

³After the believers in Antioch had sent Paul, Barnabas, and the others on their way, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they told the believers in those places that many non-Jews were putting their trust in Jesus. When the believers heard this, they rejoiced greatly. ⁴When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, the apostles, elders, and other believers there welcomed them. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do {among non-Jewish people}.

⁵But some of the Jewish believers who were Pharisees stood up {to get the attention of the other believers}. They said to them, "The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must receive circumcision. We must also tell them to obey the laws that God gave to Moses."

⁶Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this issue. ⁷After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up {to get everyone's attention}. He said to them, "Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you {other apostles} for an important task. He wanted me to tell the non-Jewish people the good news about Jesus. God wanted them to believe in him. ⁸God knows what every person is truly like. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews as his people. He did that by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as {he gave the Holy Spirit} to us. ⁹God treated them in the same way that he treated us. He forgave their sins because they trusted in Jesus. ¹⁰Listen carefully! God has shown what he wants, so you should not be trying to promote something else. You should not be trying to force non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish laws! That would be like putting a heavy burden on them. Our ancestors were not able to obey those laws. We Jews today have not been able to obey them either. ¹¹We are confident that God saves us Jews from our sins because of

what the Lord Jesus did for us. And we are confident that God will save in the same way those non-Jews who believe in Jesus.”

¹²After Peter had spoken, Barnabas and Paul told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people. {The miracles showed that God had accepted these non-Jews.} The people who heard Barnabas and Paul tell about these miracles were so fascinated that all they did was listen. None of them said anything.

¹³When Barnabas and Paul had finished speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to everyone. He said, “Fellow believers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simon Peter has told you how God previously showed that he cared about the non-Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a group of people who would belong to him. ¹⁵What God said long ago, as we can read in the writings of one of the prophets, agrees with that:

¹⁶Later on, I will help the Israelites again. I will restore the kingdom of David that has been conquered and destroyed. {I will do that by making one of the descendants of David the king of Israel again.} It will be as if I was rebuilding a house after it had been torn down.

¹⁷I will do this so that the rest of the people in the world will want me to be their Lord. This will include even the non-Jewish people whom I have chosen to belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I, the Lord God, have said that I will do it.

¹⁸I told my people long ago that I would do this.”

¹⁹James continued to speak. He said, “Therefore I think that we should not tell the non-Jewish people who are becoming disciples of Jesus that they have to obey all of our Jewish laws and rituals. ²⁰Instead, we should write a letter to them about only a few things. They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols. They should not have sexual relations with someone to whom they are not married. They should not eat meat from animals that people have strangled to kill them for butchering. They should not eat or drink any blood. ²¹{We should tell the Gentiles not to do these things because they would be very offensive to Jews. The laws that Moses wrote forbid these things. Jews would expect Gentiles to know that God would not want them to do these things because} people read those laws aloud in the Jewish meeting places on every Sabbath day. They have done this in cities in many different places for a very long time.”

²²The apostles and the elders, along with all the other believers in Jerusalem, agreed with what James said. So they decided that they should choose men from the church in Jerusalem and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Those men would let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas the son of Sabbas and Silas. These were both leaders of the believers at Jerusalem. ²³They wrote the following letter, which they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch:

“We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you. We are writing this to you non-Jewish believers who live in the city of Antioch and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia.

²⁴We have heard that some men from our church came to you and taught you things that were different from what you learned when you first believed in Jesus. We have heard that what they told you made you upset. We want you to know that we did not send these men to you.

²⁵We met together and we all agreed that it would be good to choose some men and ask them to go to you. We are sending them along with Barnabas and Paul, whom we love very much.

²⁶Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

²⁷We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing.

²⁸We believe that the Holy Spirit has shown us that we should not require you to obey all of the Jewish laws. That would be difficult and unnecessary. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions:

²⁹You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat or drink any blood.

You should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

You should not have sexual relations with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. We wish you well."

³⁰Then the apostles and elders sent Barnabas, Paul, Judas, and Silas on their way. They traveled from the city of Jerusalem to the city of Antioch. They assembled the believers there and read the letter to them. ³¹When the believers there read the letter, they were glad, because its message encouraged them. ³²Judas and Silas were prophets. They said many things to encourage the Gentile believers. They helped them to trust in Jesus even more.

³³Judas and Silas stayed in Antioch for a long time. Then, when they were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well and they left. ³⁴^[1] [But Silas thought it would be best for them to stay there. So Judas went back to Jerusalem alone.] ³⁵However, Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch. There they and many others taught the believers and shared the good news about Jesus.

³⁶After a while Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the good news about Jesus. That way we can find out how well they are continuing to believe in and obey Jesus." ³⁷{Barnabas agreed that it would be good to go back and visit these believers.} But Barnabas said that he wanted to take John, whose other name was Mark, along with them again. ³⁸However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought it was a bad idea to take Mark with them. Paul said this because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia. Mark had not continued to work with them. ³⁹Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about whether they should bring John Mark with them. So they separated from each other. Barnabas went on a journey of his own and took Mark with him. They sailed on a ship to the island of Cyprus. ⁴⁰Paul decided to travel with Silas. The believers in Antioch asked God graciously to help them. Then Paul and Silas departed from Antioch. ⁴¹Paul traveled {with Silas} through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. In those places, they helped the groups of believers to trust in Jesus even more.

15:34 ^[1]

Chapter 16

¹Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. Now a believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish woman who believed in Jesus. His father, however, was a Greek man. {Because this man was not Jewish, he did not observe the law of Moses}. ²The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy. ³Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he arranged for someone to circumcise Timothy. Paul did that so that the Jews who lived in those other places would accept Timothy. Those Jews knew that Timothy's non-Jewish father would not have circumcised him.

⁴So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they encouraged the believers to do what the apostles and elders in Jerusalem had told them to do.

⁵They helped the believers in those towns to trust Jesus even more. More people became believers every day.

⁶Paul and his companions wanted to share the good news about Jesus in the province of Asia. But the Holy Spirit showed them that he did not want them to do that. So they went instead through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia{, trying to discover where the Holy Spirit wanted them to share the good news}. ⁷They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia. From there they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia. But once again the Holy Spirit showed them that he did not want them to share the good news there. ⁸So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas{, a city by the sea}. ⁹That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from

the province of Macedonia. That man was begging Paul, "Come across the sea to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰{I, Luke, joined Paul and his companions in Troas.} After Paul saw that vision, we made arrangements right away to travel to Macedonia. We were certain that God had called us to share the good news about Jesus with the people there.

¹¹We got on a boat and sailed from Troas right to the island of Samothrace. The next day we sailed to the city of Neapolis. ¹²Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in the province of Macedonia. Many Roman citizens lived there. We decided to stay in Philippi for a while.

¹³On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate and walked down to the river. {Since there was no synagogue in the city,} we knew that Jewish people would gather to pray at a place like that. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray. So we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. ¹⁴A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, She was a merchant who sold luxurious purple cloth. She believed in the God of Israel and worshiped him. The Lord God enabled her to understand what Paul was saying{, and she trusted in Jesus}. ¹⁵Paul baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house. Then she said to us, "If you recognize that I believe sincerely in Jesus, please come to my house and stay there." So we accepted her invitation and stayed at her house.

¹⁶Another day, as we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her the power to tell what would happen to people in the future. People paid a lot of money to the men who were her owners so that she would tell them what was going to happen to them. ¹⁷This young woman followed Paul and the rest of us everywhere we went. She was continually shouting, "These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you!" ¹⁸She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became so upset that he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, "In the name of Jesus the Messiah, I command you to come out of her!" Immediately the evil spirit left her. ¹⁹Then her owners realized that she could no longer predict what would happen to people. That meant she could no longer earn money for them. That made them very angry. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the open area of the city where its rulers were {so that the rulers could judge them}. ²⁰The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers. They told them, "These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. ²¹They are teaching that we should do things that our Roman laws do not allow us to do!" ²²Many people in the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas. {This convinced the Roman rulers that they must be bad men.} So the rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and beat them with wooden rods. ²³So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. ²⁴Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

²⁵About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the whole jail. As soon as the earthquake struck, it caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened the prisoners to fall off. ²⁷The jailer woke up and saw that the earthquake had opened the doors of the jail. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail. So he pulled out his sword to kill himself{, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners had escaped}. ²⁸Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, "Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!" ²⁹The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches. {It was midnight and dark, and he wanted to be sure that all the prisoners were still in the prison}. He hurried in {to the inner cell where he had put Paul and Silas}. The jailer was shaking with fear{, because the rulers had told him to guard them carefully. When he saw that Paul and Silas were still there,} he knelt down in front of them to honor them {for sparing his life by not escaping}. ³⁰Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail. He asked them, "Sirs, I want God to save me. What do I need to do?" ³¹They answered, "If you put your trust in Jesus as your Lord, God will save you. God will also save everyone in your family if they trust in Jesus."

³²Then Paul and Silas spoke about Jesus to him and everyone in his family. ³³The jailer washed their wounds, even though it was the middle of the night. Then right away Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his family.

³⁴Then the jailer brought Paul and Silas into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his whole family were all very happy because they had believed in God.

³⁵The next morning, the city rulers told some officers to go to the prison and tell the jailer, "Let those two prisoners go now!" ³⁶When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, "The city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two can leave the prison now. Do not worry, no one will arrest you again." ³⁷But Paul said to the jailer, with the officers listening, "The city rulers had their soldiers beat us in front of a crowd. Without convicting us of any crime, they put us in prison. They did those things to us even though we are Roman citizens. And now they want to send us away without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison."

³⁸So the officers went and told the city rulers that Paul and Silas were refusing to leave the prison unless the rulers came and released them personally. When the city rulers learned that they were Roman citizens, they became very afraid. {They knew that they had done the wrong thing by beating Roman citizens and putting them in prison without a trial.} ³⁹So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰After Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus. Then Paul, Silas, and Timothy left the city of Philippi. {I, Luke, remained there for some time.}

Chapter 17

¹Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia. Then they came to the city of Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there. ²On the Sabbath day, Paul went to the meeting place as he usually did. For three weeks he went there on each Sabbath day. He proved to the people from the Scriptures {that Jesus was the Messiah}. ³Paul showed very clearly that in the Scriptures the prophets wrote that the Messiah would have to die but then become alive again. He said, "I am telling you about Jesus. This man is the Messiah." ⁴Some of the Jews in the synagogue believed what Paul said about Jesus. They began to meet with Paul and Silas. Many non-Jewish people who worshiped God and many influential women also believed the message about Jesus. They too began to meet with Paul and Silas.

⁵But some leaders of the Jews became jealous {because so many people were believing what Paul taught}. So they went to the open area of the city and found some bad men to help them. They used those men to gather a crowd and cause a great disturbance in the city. The crowd ran to the house of a man named Jason, where they thought Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people was. ⁶They discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house. However, they found Jason and dragged him and some of the other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They told the rulers, "These men who have been disturbing the way that people live have now come here also, ⁷and this man Jason has invited them to stay at his house. These other men whom we have brought to you are also friendly with them. They are all disloyal to Caesar our king. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!" ⁸When the city rulers and the crowd of people that had gathered heard that, they became very upset. ⁹The city rulers made Jason and the other believers pay a fine. {But they told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not cause any more trouble.} Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

¹⁰So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place. ¹¹Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing to listen to God's message. But the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen. They listened carefully to the message about Jesus. Every day they read the Scriptures for themselves to find out whether what Paul said about Jesus was true. ¹²Because of Paul's teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

¹³But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul. ¹⁴So right away some of the believers in Berea took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.

¹⁵When Paul and the men who were taking him arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, "Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can." Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

¹⁶In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city. ¹⁷So Paul went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews there. He also spoke with the Greeks who had accepted what Jews believe. He also went every day to the open area of the city and had conversations with the people he met there.

¹⁸Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. Some of them called themselves Epicureans, and others called themselves Stoics. They told Paul what they believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, "He really does not know what he is talking about." But others said, "He seems to be teaching a philosophy about some gods that we have never heard of." Those others said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again{, and they thought that Resurrection was the name of a god}.

¹⁹So they invited Paul to come with them to the place where the philosophers in the city met. They told Paul, "Please come with us, because we would like to know what this new message is that you are teaching people.

²⁰You are teaching us some things that we do not understand. We want to know what they mean." ²¹The people of Athens and the people from other regions who had come to live there greatly enjoyed talking about new ideas.

²²The philosophers asked Paul to stand in the middle of their group. He did, and then he said, "People of Athens, I have seen many of the things you do, and I can tell how religious you are. ²³I say that because, while I was walking through your city, I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar on which someone had carved these words: THIS HONORS A GOD WHOM WE DO NOT KNOW. So now let me tell you about that God whom you worship but whom you do not know.

²⁴He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth. He does not live in temples that people have built. ²⁵He does not need to have people do anything for him. He is the one who makes people alive. He gives them everything they need.

²⁶In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. God determined where and when each people group would live. ²⁷He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. People will find God if they sincerely look for him, because he is very close to each one of us. ²⁸It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, 'Because we are his children.'

²⁹Therefore, because we are God's children, we should not think that God is like an idol that a person would design and make out of gold, silver, or stone. ³⁰In the past, people did not know what God wanted them to do. So God did not punish them for what they did. But now God commands all people everywhere to stop doing wrong things.

³¹God tells us that on a day that he has chosen, he is going to judge all of us justly. God will have Jesus, the man he has chosen, do the judging. God has made sure that we understand this by making Jesus alive again after he died."

³²When the philosophers heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day. ³³After they said that, Paul walked away. ³⁴However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

Chapter 18

¹After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. ²In Corinth Paul met a Jew whose name was Aquila. He was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had recently come from the city of Rome in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul introduced himself to Aquila and Priscilla. ³Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents. So he stayed with them and they worked together. ⁴Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place. There he conversed with both Jews and non-Jews. He helped many of them to believe in Jesus.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from the region of Macedonia, Paul felt strongly that he should devote all of his time to proclaiming the good news. So he kept telling the Jews sincerely that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶But the Jews argued with Paul and said bad things about him. So he shook the dust off his clothes {to show that he wanted to have nothing to do with them any more}. He said to them, "If God punishes you, it is your responsibility! I have done everything I could to show you the truth! From now on I will talk to people who are not Jewish!" ⁷So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and he preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God. ⁸After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in Jesus. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family. They also believed in Jesus and Paul baptized them.

⁹One night Paul had a vision in which Jesus spoke to him. He said, "Do not be afraid {of the people who are against you}. Keep telling people about me. ¹⁰{You can keep speaking confidently} because I will help you. No one will be able to attack you and hurt you, because there are many people in this city who love me {and will defend you}."

¹¹So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. He shared the good news about Jesus with the people there.

¹²Then a man named Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia. The Jewish leaders {thought he would take their side so they} got together and seized Paul. They brought him to the governor and made accusations against him. ¹³They said, "This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that Roman law does not permit." ¹⁴Paul was about to say something to defend himself. But Gallio said to the Jewish leaders, "If this man had done something terribly wrong that broke our Roman laws, naturally I would listen to what you Jews want to tell me. ¹⁵However, you are only complaining about things that Paul has been saying. You are arguing about who deserves what name. These are disputes about your own Jewish laws. So you must settle this yourselves. These are not the kind of things that deserve my attention!" ¹⁶After Gallio said that, he told some soldiers to make the Jewish leaders leave the court. ¹⁷But instead of leaving right away, the Jewish leaders grabbed the man who was in charge of their synagogue. His name was Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge's seat {because they thought Paul had persuaded him to believe in Jesus}. Gallio did nothing to stop them.

¹⁸Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. {Paul left Silas and Timothy in Corinth.} He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made. ¹⁹They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and had conversations with the Jews there about Jesus. ²⁰They asked him to stay longer, but he told them that he could not stay. ²¹But as Paul left, he told the Jews in Ephesus, "I promise that I will come back if God wants me to." Then Paul got on a ship and sailed away from Ephesus.

²²When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went from there to Jerusalem and visited with the believers there. Then he returned to the city of Antioch{, where he had begun his trip}.

²³Paul remained for some time with the believers in Antioch. Then he left and traveled to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He helped the believers in each city to believe more steadfastly in Jesus.

²⁴While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria, and he spoke very well. He had carefully studied the Scriptures. ²⁵Other believers had taught Apollos how Jesus wanted people to live. He enthusiastically taught those things correctly to the people in Ephesus.

However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus. He only knew that John the Baptizer had said to repent and receive baptism to get ready for Jesus the Messiah. ²⁶Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place and told the people there the things he had learned about Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home. There they taught him more about Jesus.

²⁷When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he did much to help those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. ²⁸The leaders of the Jews were denying that Jesus was the Messiah. But as many other people listened, Apollos showed convincingly that they were wrong. He did that by proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Chapter 19

¹While Apollos was still in the city of Corinth, Paul {finished visiting the churches in Phrygia and Galatia. Then he} traveled through the province of Asia and came to the city of Ephesus. There he met some people who said that they were believers. ²He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God's message?" They answered, "No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³So Paul asked, "So when someone baptized you, what did you know?" They replied, "We believed what John the Baptizer taught." ⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a sign that people were giving up their evil thoughts and deeds and wanting to obey God. But John also told people that the Messiah would soon appear and that they should believe in him. He was talking about Jesus." ⁵When those men heard that, they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul then baptized them because they believed. ⁶After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and each of them received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned. They also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave them. ⁷There were about 12 men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

⁸For three months after that, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and preached there. He taught the people convincingly about how God should rule their lives. ⁹But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. In front of everyone in the synagogue, they said bad things about believing in Jesus. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet every day in a large room where a man whose name was Tyrannus usually taught people. ¹⁰For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about Jesus.

¹¹God also gave Paul the power to do great miracles. ¹²If those who were sick could not come to Paul, people would take pieces of cloth that Paul had touched and place them on the sick people. When they did this, the sick people would become well and the evil spirits would leave them.

¹³There were some Jews who traveled from place to place, commanding the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of them tried to make evil spirits come out of people by commanding them to leave by the authority of Jesus. When those Jews were with a person who had an evil spirit, one of them would say, "I command you to come out by the authority of the man named Jesus whom Paul teaches about!" ¹⁴Specifically, there were seven men who were doing this. They were the sons of a Jewish man named Sceva, who was a chief priest. ¹⁵{One day two of the sons of Sceva were in the house of a man who had an evil spirit. They tried to make the spirit come out. But it did not come out.} Instead, the evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you authority to make me leave this man!" ¹⁶{After the evil spirit said that,} suddenly it made the man jump on them. He knocked down these two sons of Sceva and hurt them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They ran out of the house {to save their lives}. ¹⁷Soon people throughout Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They realized that they should regard Jesus with great awe, and they spoke of him very respectfully.

¹⁸At that time, many people in the group of believers came to their leaders. While other believers were listening, they told about the evil things that they had been doing. ¹⁹Now many of the believers had been sorcerers. They

took their scrolls that told about spells and curses and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. The believers added up how much the scrolls were worth. They were worth 50,000 silver coins.

²⁰In this powerful way, many people heard the message about Jesus and believed in him.

²¹And after all of this happened, the Holy Spirit led Paul to decide to go to Jerusalem. Paul planned to visit the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia first. He said, "After I have been to Jerusalem, I must also go to Rome." ²²So Paul sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to the province of Macedonia. But he stayed for a while in the city of Ephesus in the province of Asia.

²³But soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him. ²⁴This happened because of a man in Ephesus whose name was Demetrius. He was a craftsman who worked with silver metal. He made statues of the goddess Artemis out of silver. Demetrius paid a lot of money to the workers who made these idols.

²⁵Demetrius called together the craftsmen and the workers who made the idols. He said to them, "You all know that we make a lot of money doing our work. ²⁶But you know very well that Paul has led many people in Ephesus not to buy the statues that we make. In fact, the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make. Paul tells people that the gods that we make are not gods {and that we should not worship them}. ²⁷{If people keep listening to Paul,} there is a risk that we will go out of business. Even worse, people will no longer come to the temple of our great goddess Artemis. They will not believe that she is worthy to worship. They will believe that she is not a goddess at all. Yet people throughout the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!" ²⁸Then all the people there became very angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, "The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" ²⁹This shouting made the people in the city very confused. They ran as a crowd to the city stadium {to try to find out what was happening}. Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul, were out in the city. Some people took hold of them and dragged them to the stadium. ³⁰Now Paul wanted to go into the stadium to talk to the people. However, the other believers would not let him go there. ³¹Also, some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to warn Paul not to go into the theater.

³²In the stadium, the people were very confused. Because they were confused, some were shouting one thing while others were shouting something else. But most of them did not even know why they were all in the stadium!

³³Then some of the Jews in the stadium pushed a man whose name was Alexander to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Some of the others there told him how he could do that. So Alexander put his hands up to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews had not caused the trouble. ³⁴But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew. {They knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis.} So for two hours the non-Jews shouted together, "Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, "My fellow citizens, you do not need to be concerned about the worship of Artemis. People throughout the world know that our city of Ephesus is a special place where the goddess Artemis has her temple. Indeed, the sacred image of her fell down to us from heaven! ³⁶These are established facts. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything foolish. ³⁷You should not have brought these two men here. They work together with Paul, but they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. ³⁸If Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. The courts are in session. There are judges present whom the government has appointed. They can present their case before the judges in court. ³⁹And if you are concerned about anything else, you should ask your rulers about it when those rulers meet together. ⁴⁰You should really not have rushed here shouting, because the Roman government may accuse us of having a riot today. If the rulers ask me what you were all shouting about, I will not know how to answer them. There was no good reason for it." ⁴¹That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home{, and they did go to their homes}.

Chapter 20

¹Then, after the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them goodbye and left to go to the region of Macedonia. ²Then Paul traveled through Macedonia and said many things to encourage the believers there. Then he continued on to Greece. ³Paul then stayed in Greece for three months. He planned to return to Syria by ship. But he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to travel by land. Once again he went through Macedonia. ⁴Now the men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. ⁵{I, Luke, joined Paul when he came back through the city of Philippi.} Now the other seven men sailed to the city of Troas before we did, so they waited there for the two of us. ⁶But Paul and I stayed in the city of Philippi until the end of the festival when Jewish people eat bread without yeast. Then we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived there and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. We all stayed in Troas for seven days.

⁷While we were in Troas, we gathered together on the first day of the week to share a meal with the other believers. {We met on that day because it was the day when Jesus became alive again after he died.} Paul was planning to leave Troas the next day, so when he spoke to the believers, he spoke for a long time. He kept speaking until midnight. ⁸We had gathered in an upstairs room. Many oil lamps were burning there. ⁹Now a young man whose name was Eutychus was in the room. He was seated on the sill of an open window. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he was sound asleep. He slipped out of the window and fell three stories down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. ¹⁰Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man. He also put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, "Do not worry, because he is alive again!" ¹¹Then Paul went back up to the room where he was meeting with the believers. They shared a meal together. Afterwards he talked at length with the believers, until the sun came up. Then he left. ¹²Before Paul left, the believers brought the young man who had fallen out the window back to the meeting. Everyone there was extremely encouraged to see that he was alive again.

¹³We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to walk by himself to the town of Assos. So the rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. We planned to bring Paul on board there. ¹⁴And when we met Paul in Assos, he got on the ship with us and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. ¹⁵The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the island of Chios. The day after that, we sailed to the island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. ¹⁶Paul did not want to have a delay in Asia. So he had decided we should go to Miletus, south of Ephesus and past its harbor. He was trying to travel quickly because he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem, if possible, by the time of the Pentecost festival{, and it was almost time for that festival}.

¹⁷So when the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

¹⁸When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, "You know very well how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you, from the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia {until the day I left}. ¹⁹{You know how} I kept serving Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. {You also know} how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. ²⁰{You also know} that{, when I preached God's message to you,} I never left out anything that would help you. {You know that} I taught you God's message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. ²¹I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews. I told them all that they must stop their sinful behavior and start obeying God. They must believe in our Lord Jesus."

²²"And now, I want you to know, I am going to Jerusalem. I am going because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know exactly what will happen to me there. ²³But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will

cause me to suffer. ²⁴But I do not care even if people kill me, so long as I am first able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He told me to tell people the good news that God saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. ²⁵I have preached to you the message that God is reigning as king. But now, I must tell you, I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will ever see me. ²⁶So I want you all to understand right now that if anyone who has heard me preach dies without trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, ²⁷After all, I have told you everything that God has revealed {about how he saves us}. ²⁸You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message, and you must also help all the other believers to do the same. The Holy Spirit has given you the responsibility of caring for them. Jesus died on the cross to make those who believe in him his own special people. ²⁹I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers ³⁰Even some leaders from your own group will start teaching believers the wrong things. They will teach those wrong things to try to get disciples of their own. ³¹So be careful that all of you keep believing the true message about Jesus! Remember that throughout the three years I was with you, I warned each one of you consistently and very sincerely that you should stay faithful to Jesus."

³²"And now as I leave you, I ask God to protect you and help you to keep believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing that message, it will make you strong, and God will give you the good things that he has promised to all of those who belong to him.

³³As for me, I never tried to get money or fine clothing from anyone. ³⁴You certainly know that I worked with my hands to earn the money that my helpers and I needed. ³⁵In everything that I did, I showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

³⁶When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. ³⁷They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. ³⁸They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

Chapter 21

¹Then, after we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got back onto the ship and sailed directly to the island of Cos. {There the ship stopped for the night.} The next day we sailed in the ship from Cos to the island of Rhodes. {There the ship stopped again.} The day after that, we went to the town of Patara. {The ship was going no farther than that.} ²{At Patara we left that ship,} but we learned that there was another ship that would be leaving soon and going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. ³Now as we traveled across the sea, we saw the island of Cyprus. We sailed to the south of that island. We continued sailing until we arrived at the city of Tyre in the province of Syria. The ship had to stay there for several days because its workers needed to unload the cargo.

⁴But we learned where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. God's Spirit revealed to some of the believers that Paul would suffer if he went to Jerusalem. So they encouraged Paul not to go there. ⁵But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed. ⁶Then we all said goodbye to each other. We who were traveling with Paul got onto the ship with him, and the other believers returned to where they lived in Tyre.

⁷After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. ⁸Then, on the next day, we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea. There we went to visit Philip. He had a reputation for telling others how to become disciples of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to take care of the widows. He invited us to stay in his home. ⁹Now he had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave them.

¹⁰And after we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus arrived in Caesarea from the district of Judea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit gave him. ¹¹Coming over to where we were, he removed the belt from Paul's waist. He tied his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt like this. Then they will ask the non-Jewish people to arrest him as a criminal.'" ¹²When the rest of us heard that, we and the other believers there pled with Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" ¹³But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to discourage me from going! You should not cry, because I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem because I serve the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴Then we realized that Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. So we did not try any longer to stop him. We said, "May the Lord's will be done!"

¹⁵Then, after those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Now some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to stay in the house of a man whose name was Mnason. He was from the island of Cyprus. He had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear the message about him.

¹⁷And when we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily. ¹⁸Then, the next day, Paul and the rest of us went to speak with James. {He was the main leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem.} All of the other leaders were also there. ¹⁹So Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. ²⁰And when they heard what God had done, James and the other elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us Jewish people who have believed in the Lord Jesus. You also know that we continue very carefully to obey the laws that Moses gave us. ²¹But people have told our fellow Jewish believers that when you are with non-Jews, you tell the Jewish believers who live among them that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. {We do not believe that they are telling the truth about you.} ²²But our fellow Jewish believers will surely learn that you have come here to Jerusalem. {They will be angry with you because of what they have heard about you.} So you need to do something to show them that what they have heard about you is not true. ²³So please do what we suggest to you. There are four men among us who have made a vow to God. ²⁴Go with these men to the temple courts and do the ceremonies that are necessary for you and for them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for them to offer the sacrifices that they need to offer because they have made these vows, pay for what they offer. After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they promised God they would do. When people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what people have told them about you is not true. Instead, they will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. ²⁵Now as for the non-Jewish believers, we elders here in Jerusalem talked about which of our laws they should obey. We wrote them a letter telling them what we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol. They should not eat any blood. They should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told them that they should not have sexual relations with someone to whom they are not married." ²⁶{Paul agreed to do what James and the other leaders asked him to do.} The next day he took the four men and together they did the ceremonies that were necessary for them to worship in the temple. After that, Paul went to the temple courts and told the priests that these men had done everything they had promised God they would do. He told the priests that they just needed to offer the sacrifices that the law required. Paul kept going to the temple courts with the men until each one of them had offered the necessary sacrifices.

²⁷Now it took seven days for the ceremonies that allowed the men to return to their regular lives after their vows. Near the end of that time, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple courtyard. They were very upset with him, and they made many other Jews who were there upset with Paul as well. The Jews from Asia grabbed on to Paul. ²⁸They shouted, "Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is teaching people wherever he goes that the Jewish people are not special. He teaches people that they should no longer obey the laws of Moses and that they do not need to respect this temple. He has even brought non-Jews here into the court of our temple, causing this holy place to become polluted!" ²⁹They said these things because they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus. He was a non-Jew from Ephesus. {The Jews did not permit non-Jews to be in certain parts of the temple courtyard.} These Jews from the province of Asia thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. ³⁰People all over the city heard that there was

trouble at the temple courtyard and they came running there. The crowd seized Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The temple guards quickly shut the gates to the temple courtyard so that the people could not do anything violent inside the temple area.

³¹While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. ³²The commander quickly gathered some officers and a large group of soldiers. They ran down the fortress steps to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling at Paul and beating him saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

³³Then the commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul's arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, "Who is this man, and what has he done?" ³⁴But some of the many people there were shouting one thing and some were shouting something else. And because the situation was so confused, the commander could not find out who Paul was. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress that was connected with the temple court so that he could question him there. ³⁵The soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress. But many people followed them, still trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. ³⁶The commander knew that Paul was in danger because the crowd that was following the soldiers kept shouting, "Kill him! Kill him!"

³⁷And as the soldiers were about to bring Paul into the fortress, he said {in Greek} to the commander, "May I speak with you?" And the commander said, "I am surprised that you can speak Greek!" ³⁸That must mean that you are that man from Egypt who rebelled against the Roman government not long ago. He took 4,000 violent men with him out into the desert {so that we could not catch him}." ³⁹Paul said in reply, "I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people." ⁴⁰Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps that led up to the fortress. He motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became very quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

Chapter 22

¹Paul said, "Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, please listen to me now while I answer your accusations." ²When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became even quieter and listened. Then Paul said to them, ³"I am a Jew, as are all of you. I come from the city of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher, and he taught me very accurately. I have obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God. I am sure that all of you here also obey those laws. ⁴That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I even looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I arrested them and had the authorities put them in jail. ⁵The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Damascus. Those letters gave me the power to go there and arrest people in that city {who believed in Jesus}. I could then take them as prisoners to Jerusalem so that the Jewish authorities could punish them.

⁶So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me. ⁷{The light was so bright that} I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me {from up in the sky}. It said, 'Saul! Saul! Stop doing things to hurt me!' ⁸And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are hurting.' ⁹Now the men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice was saying to me. ¹⁰Then I asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.' ¹¹After that, I could not see, because that bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. ¹²Then a man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. The Jews living in Damascus said very good things about him. ¹³He came and stood beside me. He said to me, 'Saul, my friend, see again!' Instantly I could see and I

saw him standing beside me. ¹⁴Then he said: 'The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you for a special purpose. He will show you what he wants you to do. He has allowed you to see Jesus the Messiah, {gloriously alive again}. You have heard him speak to you himself. ¹⁵He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. ¹⁶So please do not delay! Let me baptize you right now. Pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!'"

¹⁷"Then later I returned to Jerusalem. One day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. ¹⁸In my vision I saw Jesus as he said to me, 'Leave Jerusalem quickly, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!' ¹⁹But I said to him, 'Lord, they know that I went from one synagogue to another looking for people who believed in you. I was putting them in jail, and I was even beating them. ²⁰They remember that when people killed Stephen because he said you were the Messiah, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were murdering him had thrown aside!' ²¹But Jesus said to me, 'Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to tell non-Jews about me!'"

²²The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about Jesus sending him to non-Jews. Then they began shouting, "Kill him! A man like him does not deserve to live any longer!" ²³And while they were shouting, they took off their robes and threw dirt into the air. ²⁴So the commander told his soldiers to take Paul into the fortress. He told them to whip Paul to make him admit what he had done that had made the Jews so angry with him. ²⁵Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to the officer near him, "You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me. I am a Roman citizen, and no one has declared me guilty of anything!" ²⁶When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, "This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!" ²⁷{The commander was surprised when he heard that.} He went into the prison and said to Paul, "Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?" Paul answered, "Yes, I am." ²⁸Then the commander said, "I too am a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen." But Paul said, "I have been a Roman citizen for my whole life." ²⁹The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they immediately backed away from him. The commander also became afraid. He knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul's hands.

³⁰The commander still wanted to know for sure why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he brought Paul down the stairway to the temple courts. He took him to where the council was meeting and told him to stand in front of them.

Chapter 23

¹So Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said, "My fellow Jews, throughout my life I have lived respecting our God. I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong." ²When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. ³Then Paul said to Ananias, "God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws! You commanded those men to strike me without proving that I have done anything wrong!" ⁴But the men who were standing near Paul said to him, "You should not speak badly to God's high priest!" ⁵Paul replied, "My fellow Jews, {I am sorry that I said that.} I did not know that the man who told one of you to hit me was the high priest. {If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about him.} I know that we can read in the Law of Moses, 'Do not speak badly about any of your leaders.'"

⁶Now Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, "My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee. My ancestors have been Pharisees as well. You have put me on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to live again." ⁷And when he said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to argue with one another {about whether people who have died will

become alive again}. The two groups strongly disagreed with each other. ⁸They disagreed so strongly because Sadducees do not believe that after people die, they will become alive again. They also do not believe that there are angels or other kinds of spirits. But Pharisees do believe those things. ⁹Then both groups started shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up. One of them insisted, "We think that this man has done nothing wrong. We believe that an angel or some other spirit spoke to him. {So we must all agree that he is innocent!}" ¹⁰Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became very violent with one another. The commander became concerned that they would hurt Paul badly. So he told soldiers to come down from the fortress into the temple courtyard. He told them to take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

¹¹That night, Paul saw Jesus come and stand near him. Jesus said to him, "Be brave! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me. I will protect you so that you can tell people in Rome about me too."

¹²The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. To make sure that they killed him, they all promised that they would not eat or drink anything before they had killed Paul. They asked God to kill them if they did not do what they promised. ¹³Now there were more than 40 men who agreed to kill Paul.

¹⁴They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, "God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything before we have killed Paul. ¹⁵So to help us, we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down from the fortress to meet with you again. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here."

¹⁶But the son of Paul's sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul.

¹⁷When Paul heard about the plan to kill him, he called one of the officers and said to him, "Please take this young man to the commander. He needs to tell him something." ¹⁸So the officer took Paul's nephew to the commander. The officer told the commander, "Paul, whom we are guarding here, asked to speak with me. He said, 'Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something important.'" ¹⁹So the commander took Paul's nephew by the hand and led him off by himself. Then he asked him, "What do you have to tell me?" ²⁰Then Paul's nephew replied, "There are some Jews who are going to ask you tomorrow to bring Paul down from the fortress to meet with their council again. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. {But that is not true.} ²¹So do not do what they ask you to do. There are actually more than 40 Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on his way to the council. They have even promised God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it. They are just waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking." ²²The commander warned Paul's nephew, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan." Then he sent him away.

²³Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of 200 soldiers ready to travel. Take along 70 soldiers riding horses and 200 other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight and go to the city of Caesarea. ²⁴Take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix." ²⁵Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: ²⁶"Your Excellency, Governor Felix, this is Claudius Lysias writing to you. I send you my greetings. ²⁷I am sending you a man whose name is Paul. Certain Jews had seized him and were about to kill him. But I learned that he was a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. ²⁸I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. ²⁹I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The accusations they made against him had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. ³⁰Then someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man. So I sent him to you right away so that you could give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you why they are accusing him. Goodbye."

³¹So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night to the city of Antipatris. ³²The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem and the soldiers who rode horses continued traveling to Caesarea with Paul. ³³When the soldiers who rode horses arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor and they brought Paul to him. ³⁴So the governor read the letter. Then he asked

Paul, "What province are you from?" Paul answered, "I am from Cilicia." ³⁵Then the governor said, "When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of you says and then I will judge your case." Then he commanded his soldiers to guard Paul in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

Chapter 24

¹Then, five days after the Roman soldiers brought Paul to Caesarea, the Jewish high priest Ananias traveled there from Jerusalem. He brought some other Jewish elders with him. They also brought a man who spoke well and knew the Roman laws well. His name was Tertullus. The Jewish leaders wanted him to persuade the governor that he should punish Paul. ²So the governor commanded his soldiers to bring Paul in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus started arguing that Felix should punish him. He said to the governor, "During the time that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have made many things better for our Jewish people. ³Therefore, Honorable Governor Felix, we continually thank you for everything that you have done for us, wherever you have done those things. ⁴But so that I do not use too much of your time, I will speak briefly. Please listen to what I have to say. I know you will make the right decision about this case. ⁵Now we can assure you that this man causes trouble wherever he goes. He encourages all the Jews to rebel against you Romans. He leads a radical group within Judaism. The members of that group call themselves the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to make our temple in Jerusalem no longer holy. And that is why we arrested him.^[1] [And we wanted to judge him according to our law. ⁷[²] But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us, ⁸[³] sending us to you.] If you question him yourself about all these matters, you will be able to learn that everything I am saying about him is true." ⁹Then the Jewish leaders who had come to Caesarea accused Paul too. They insisted that what Tertullus said about him was true.

¹⁰Then the governor signaled with his hand that he wanted Paul to speak. So Paul spoke to defend himself. He said, "Governor Felix, I know that you have governed this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I am eager to defend myself to you {because I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly}. ¹¹You can easily confirm that I went to Jerusalem to worship God just 12 days ago. ¹²No one can say truthfully that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts, because I did not do that. No one can say truthfully that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. ¹³So they cannot prove to you the things of which they are now accusing me. ¹⁴But I admit to you that this is true: I live as Jesus taught us to live. They claim that makes me different from other Jews, but that is how I obey the God whom our Jewish ancestors worshiped. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the prophets wrote in their books. ¹⁵I believe, just as these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to live again. God will do this both for those who were good and for those who were wicked. ¹⁶Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. ¹⁷Let me tell you why I was in Jerusalem. After I had been in other places for several years, I returned there to bring some money to help my fellow Jews who were poor. While I was there, I also offered sacrifices in the temple courtyard. ¹⁸Some Jews from Asia saw me offering those sacrifices in the temple courtyard. I had completed the ritual that allowed me to worship God there. There was no crowd with me. I was not causing anyone to riot. ¹⁹No, it was those Jews from the province of Asia who caused the people to riot! And they should really be here in your court to accuse me if they think that I have done anything wrong. ²⁰But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. ²¹They might say that I did this one thing wrong: When I was in their council, I shouted, 'You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all the people who have died to live again.'"

²²Now Felix already knew much about the group people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to the Jewish leaders, "Later, when Commander Lysias comes here, I will decide this case." ²³Then Governor Felix told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison. But he told him to allow Paul to do things freely in the prison. He also said that if Paul's friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

²⁴But several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla. She was a Jew. Felix called for Paul to speak with him. He {and Drusilla} listened to what Paul said about trusting in Jesus the Messiah. ²⁵Paul talked about what God wants people to do in order to please him. Paul also explained how people should control how they act. Paul said that there would be a time when God would judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things. So he said to Paul, "That is all I want to hear now. But when I have time, I will ask you to come to me again." ²⁶Felix was also hoping that Paul would give him some money. So he sent for Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix every time, but he did not give him any money, so Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison}.

²⁷This went on for about two years. Then a man named Porcius Festus replaced Felix as the governor. And since Felix wanted to please the Jewish leaders, he left Paul in prison.

24:6 ^[1]

24:7 ^[2]

24:8 ^[3]

Chapter 25

¹Then Festus began to rule as the governor of the province of Judea. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and traveled to Jerusalem. ²In Jerusalem, the chief priests and some important Jewish leaders insisted urgently to Festus that Paul had done things that were very wrong. ³They asked Festus to help them pursue their case against Paul. They asked him to order his soldiers to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really planning to attack him on the road and kill him. ⁴But Festus replied, "Paul is in prison in Caesarea. Now I myself plan to travel back to Caesarea very soon." ⁵"So," he said, "those of you who are able should travel there with me. If you want to accuse Paul of doing anything wrong, you can accuse him there."

⁶Festus remained in Jerusalem with the Jewish leaders for about another week. Then he returned to the city of Caesarea. The next day, Festus commanded his soldiers to bring Paul to the hall where he was sitting in the judge's seat. ⁷So the soldiers brought Paul to Festus. The Jewish leaders who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him. They accused him of doing many bad things. But they were not able to prove any of them. ⁸Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, "I have not broken any of the Jewish laws. I have not broken any of the rules about who can enter the temple. I have not broken any of the Roman laws." ⁹Festus, however, wanted to please the Jewish leaders. So he asked Paul, "Are you willing to travel to Jerusalem so that I can judge your case there?" ¹⁰But Paul replied, "No, right now you are judging me, and you represent the Emperor. This is the right place for my trial. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people. You know that is the truth. ¹¹If I deserved to die for something I had done wrong, I would accept dying as my punishment. They are accusing me of many things, but I do not deserve to die for anything I have done. So no one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I claim my right to have Caesar himself judge me." ¹²Festus conferred with the officials who advised him. Then he told Paul, "You have asked Caesar to try your case, and so I will send you to Caesar."

¹³Then, after several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea. His sister Bernice came with him. They were making a formal visit to welcome Festus as the new governor. ¹⁴Since King Agrippa and Bernice stayed in Caesarea for several days, they had time to speak with Festus about many things. At one point Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, "There is a man here whom Felix kept in prison. ¹⁵When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders accused him of many things. They asked me to condemn him to death. ¹⁶But I told them that when people accuse someone of a serious crime, we Romans do not condemn that person just to satisfy the accusers. Instead, we allow him to meet in person with his accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. ¹⁷So when those Jews came here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I convened the court and ordered the guards to bring in the prisoner. ¹⁸I thought that the Jewish leaders would accuse Paul of doing many wrong things. But when they made their accusations against him, none of the accusations were serious. ¹⁹Instead, they argued with him about what Jews should believe. They also argued about a man whose

name was Jesus. He had died, but Paul said he was alive. ²⁰I did not know how I could investigate this case from Caesarea. So I asked Paul, 'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem so that I can judge you there about these things?'

²¹But Paul asked to stay in Caesarea until the emperor himself could judge his case. So I ordered my soldiers to keep him under guard until I could send him to Casear." ²²Then Agrippa said to Festus, "Personally I would like to hear what this man has to say." Festus answered, "I will arrange for you to hear him tomorrow."

²³So the next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment. The people there showed them much honor. Some Roman commanders and some of the important people of Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded the guards to bring Paul in. ²⁴After Paul entered, Festus said, "King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here with us, you see this man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, have protested to me about him. They have demanded that I put him to death immediately. ²⁵But I found that he had done nothing to deserve being killed. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case. So I have decided to send him to Rome.

²⁶But I do not know exactly what to write to the emperor about him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to all of you, and especially to you, King Agrippa. You can question him. Then I will know what to write to the emperor. ²⁷After all, it makes sense that when I send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome, I should say exactly what wrong things people say he has done."

Chapter 26

¹Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may now speak on your own behalf." Then Paul held out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He defended himself by saying, ²"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I can explain myself to you today. I will tell you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say that I have done bad things. ³I am especially fortunate because you know so much about the customs of us Jews and the questions that we argue about. So please listen to me as I tell my whole story."

⁴"My fellow Jews know how I have lived my life since the time I was a child. They know that I have always lived among Jews and that I received my education in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me since I was young. They could tell you, if they were willing, that as a Pharisee, I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully.

⁶Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. ⁷Our 12 Jewish tribes are also waiting confidently for God to do what he promised. That is why they continue to honor him and worship him so diligently. And yet, Honored King, these Jewish leaders are saying that I have done wrong because I too am waiting confidently. ⁸None of you should find it hard to believe that God would cause people who had died to live again.

⁹But I will admit that I too once found it hard to believe. I was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from the town of Nazareth. ¹⁰So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I put many of the believers in prison. The chief priests there had given me the power to do that. And when the Sanhedrin was deciding whether to kill believers, I voted in favor of that. ¹¹I continually punished believers in Jesus in every synagogue where I could find them. I tried to force them to say that they did not believe in Jesus. I was so angry with them that I even went to foreign cities to find them.

¹²Because I told them I wanted to arrest believers in Damascus, the chief priests gave me the power to do that. So I traveled to Damascus. ¹³While I was on my way there, O King, I saw a bright light in the sky. Even though it was around noon, this light was even brighter than the sun! It shone all around me and also around those who were traveling with me. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language. He said, 'Saul, Saul, you should not be fighting against me. You are harming yourself, like an animal that is kicking against a sharp prod.' ¹⁵Then I said, 'Please tell me who you are.' And the person who was speaking to me said, 'I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against. ¹⁶But get up off the ground now. I have appeared to you in order to make you my servant. I want you to tell other people who I am, now that you have seen me. I will show you more about myself later, and I want you to tell others about that too. ¹⁷I am sending you both to Jewish people and to non-Jewish people. I will protect you from them. ¹⁸I want you to help them recognize who I really am. I want

you to help them to live in a way that pleases God. I want them to know that God can make them free from the devil's influence. I want them to know that God will forgive their sins. I want them to receive the good things that people whom God saves because they believe in me will have forever.

¹⁹So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me to do when he gave me that vision. ²⁰First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus. Then I spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem and in the countryside of Judea. I also spoke to the non-Jews there. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God to help them live in the right way. I told them they should do things that showed they had stopped sinning.

²¹It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me. ²²Because God has been helping me, I have been able to keep proclaiming these things to this very day. I have continued to tell people, regardless of their status, exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen.

²³They said that the Messiah would suffer and die. They said that he would be the first person to live again after he had died. They also said that he would tell people how God was able to save them. He would tell this, both to his own Jewish people and to non-Jewish people."

²⁴Before Paul could say anything further to defend himself, Festus shouted out loudly, "Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and that has made you crazy!" ²⁵But Paul answered, "Your Excellency, Governor Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane! ²⁶I can assure you that I am not crazy, because King Agrippa is familiar with the things I have been talking about so enthusiastically to him. I am very sure that he is aware of all of these things. They all happened very publicly. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things." ²⁸Then Agrippa answered Paul, "I would need to hear much more than this to decide to become a Christian!" ²⁹Paul replied, "Perhaps you need to hear more, or perhaps you could decide now. But either way, I pray to God that you and all of the others who are listening to me today will become like me, except for these chains!" ³⁰Then King Agrippa stood up. The governor, Bernice, and all the other important people who had come in with them also got up ³¹and left the room. After they left, they said to each other, "We should not execute this man or keep him in prison. He has done nothing to deserve that." ³²Then Agrippa said to Festus, "If this man had not appealed to Caesar, you could have released him."

Chapter 27

¹Soon the governor decided it was time to send Paul by ship to Italy. {I, Luke, traveled with him.} He put Paul and some other prisoners under the control of a military officer whose name was Julius. This man was part of a group of soldiers who reported directly to the emperor. ²So Julius put us aboard a ship from the city of Adramyttium in the province of Asia. This ship was about to sail to various places along the coast of Asia. In this way we began our journey by sea. Aristarchus, a man from the city of Thessalonica in the province of Macedonia, went with us. ³The next day we arrived at the city of Sidon. There Julius treated Paul generously. He gave him permission to go see his friends in Sidon so they could help him with whatever he needed. ⁴Then the ship sailed away from Sidon. We went along the coast of Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. ⁵After that, we crossed over the sea close to the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at the city of Myra in the province of Lycia. We got off the ship there. ⁶In Myra, Julius found a ship that had come from the city of Alexandria. It would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go aboard that ship and we left. ⁷{The winds were still against us, so} we sailed slowly for many days. It was difficult, but we finally reached the city of Cnidus. From there the wind was so strong that the ship could not sail straight westward. So we sailed along the coast of the island of Crete instead{, where the wind was not blowing strongly.} We sailed past Cape Salmone, an area of land sticking out into the water. ⁸The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete. We eventually arrived at a port whose name was Fair Havens. It was near the city of Lasea.

⁹{Because the wind was blowing from the west,} the journey from Caesarea to Fair Havens had taken much more time than the captain and centurion had planned. It had become dangerous to sail because it was late in the year and the stormy season was approaching. So Paul said to the men on the ship, ¹⁰and said to them, "Friends, God has shown me that if we continue sailing, we will suffer harm and lose many things. A great storm will destroy the

ship and its cargo and kill all of us.” ¹¹But the Roman officer did not believe what Paul said. Instead, he believed the pilot and the captain when they told him the ship would be safe. ¹²The harbor of Fair Havens did not protect the ships in it very well from winter storms. So most of the sailors recommended leaving Fair Havens. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a city on the island of Crete with a good harbor. The harbor protects ships well from winds that blow from the southwest and northwest. ¹³Because only a gentle wind was blowing from the south, the ship’s crew thought that they could reach Phoenix safely. So they lifted the ship’s anchor up out of the sea and sailed the ship close to the coastline of the island of Crete. ¹⁴After a little while, however, a stormy wind blew down from the island. It was the kind of wind that the sailors called the Northeast Wind. ¹⁵This stormy wind blew so strongly against the front of the ship that we could not sail into it. So the sailors decided to sail in the direction that the wind was blowing. It pushed us across the sea very quickly. ¹⁶However, the sailors were able to sail the ship on the side of a small island that was sheltered from the wind. The name of the island was Cauda. It was very difficult, but the sailors were finally able to gain control of the lifeboat. ¹⁷The sailors hoisted the lifeboat up onto the ship. Then they wound its ropes around the hull of the ship. They became concerned that they would get stuck in the soggy sand at Syrtis. So they took down the sails {to go more slowly}. This meant they could not steer the ship, and it went wherever the wind blew it. ¹⁸But the wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly. So on the next day, the sailors began to throw overboard the things that the ship was carrying. ¹⁹Then, on the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the ship’s sails, ropes, and poles. They did this deliberately {in order to make the ship lighter}. ²⁰But the wind continued to blow very strongly against the ship. The sky was always full of dark clouds so that the sailors could not see the sun or the stars to navigate. After all this we lost hope that we would even survive.

²¹None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, “Friends, you should have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete. Then, we would not have suffered all this damage. ²²But now please do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but it will not destroy us. ²³I know this because last night an angel came and stood by me. The God who protects me and who told me to tell others about him sent this angel. ²⁴The angel said to me, ‘Paul, do not be afraid. You will reach Rome safely and have the opportunity to testify to the emperor. I want you to know that God is being kind to you. He will make sure that everyone who is traveling with you will also survive.’ ²⁵So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen exactly as the angel told me. ²⁶However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there.”

²⁷Now on the fourteenth night after the storm began, the storm was still blowing the ship across the open sea. At about midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land. ²⁸So the sailors lowered a rope with a weight on the end to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was 40 meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found that the water was 30 meters deep. ²⁹{Because the water was getting shallower,} the sailors were afraid that the ship might crash onto some rocks. So they threw four anchors into the water from the end of the ship. Then they prayed that it would soon become light {so that they could see where the ship was going}. ³⁰Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship. They did not want anyone to know what they planned to do. So they pretended that they needed to put the lifeboat in the water so they could use it to lower some anchors from the ship’s front. ³¹But Paul said to the Roman officer and the soldiers, “If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you will not survive.” ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes and the lifeboat dropped into the sea.

³³Just before dawn, Paul encouraged everyone on the ship to eat something. He said, “For the past 14 days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything. ³⁴So now I urge you to eat some food, because you must do this to live. The storm will not kill any of you{, but if you do not eat, you will die}.” ³⁵Then after Paul said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread into pieces and began to eat some of it. ³⁶Then they all cheered up and ate some food. ³⁷Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship. ³⁸When everyone had eaten enough, the sailors made the ship lighter by throwing the rest of the wheat into the water.

³⁹At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know what it was. However, they could see a bay that had a beach. They decided to try to run the ship up onto this wide area of sand at the water's edge. ⁴⁰So they cut the ropes that attached the anchors to the ship and let the anchors fall loose into the water. They also untied the ropes that held the rudders to the ship. They raised a sail to the top of the mast so that the wind would blow into it. Then they steered the ship toward the shore. ⁴¹But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move. Big waves beat against the back of the ship and it began to break apart.

⁴²The soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape. ⁴³But the Roman officer wanted to save Paul. So he stopped the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Instead, he commanded everyone who could swim to jump off the ship first into the water and swim to shore. ⁴⁴Then he told the ones who could not swim to hold onto something that would float and drift toward the shore. Some held onto wooden boards that the waves had broken loose from the ship. Some held onto articles from the ship that would float. We did what he said, and in that way all of us made it safely to the shore.

Chapter 28

¹After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that we were on an island whose name was Malta. ²The people who lived there took care of us very generously. It was cold and it was starting to rain. So they lit a fire and invited all of us to come and warm ourselves. ³Now Paul {was helping by} collecting a bundle of pieces of wood to burn. When he put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the bundle to escape from the heat of the fire. It bit Paul on his hand and clung to it. ⁴Now the people from the island saw the snake dangling from Paul's hand. They said to each other, "This man has probably murdered someone. He has escaped from drowning in the sea. But the goddess Justice is punishing him anyway. He will die from this snake bite." ⁵But Paul shook his hand hard so that the snake would fall off his hand and back into the fire. The snake fell off and Paul was not hurt at all. ⁶Still, some of the people of the island expected that Paul's body would soon swell up because of the snake bite. Others thought he would suddenly fall down and die. But they waited a long time and did not see either of those things happen to him. So the people decided they had been wrong about who Paul was. They said to one another, "This man is not a murderer. He must be a god{, because that snake bite would have killed any human being}!"

⁷Now the people of the island had built the fire near some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. ⁸At that time Publius' father had fever and a stomach illness. He was lying sick in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹After Paul healed Publius' father, the rest of the people on the island who were sick came to him and he healed them too. ¹⁰The island people also brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. Later on, when we were ready to leave, they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

¹¹We stayed on Malta for a total of three months. Then we left on a ship that had spent the winter there. The ship was from Alexandria and was going to Italy. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. ¹²When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³Then we sailed away from Syracuse and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind began to blow from the south. So in only two more days, we reached the town of Puteoli. {There we got off the ship and went the rest of the way to Rome by land.} ¹⁴In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who asked us to stay with them for seven days. After that, we continued on to Rome.

¹⁵Some fellow believers in Rome had heard that we were coming and they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the place on the Appian Road whose name was the Market. Others met us at the place whose name was the Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and felt brave. ¹⁶After we arrived in Rome, the authorities there permitted Paul to live in a home rather than in prison. But a soldier was always there to guard him.

¹⁷Now after Paul had been in Rome for three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. And when they arrived, Paul said to them, "My dear kinsmen, I have not opposed our people or spoken against the customs of our ancestors. {But some Jews in Jerusalem seized me and tried to kill me. A Roman commander rescued me and later} sent me as a prisoner to the city of Caesarea so that the Roman authorities could put me on trial. ¹⁸The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. ¹⁹But the Jewish leaders argued that the Romans should not set me free, So I had to request that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But I did not do that because I wanted to accuse our leaders of doing anything wrong. ²⁰So I asked you to come here so that I could tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in what we Jews confidently expect that God will do for us." ²¹Then the Jewish leaders replied, "We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. And none of our fellow Jews who have come here from Judea have said anything bad about you. ²²But we would appreciate you telling us what you think about this group that you belong to. Please tell us, because we are aware that in many places people are speaking against it."

²³So they decided that they would come back on another day. On that day, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying to hear Paul speak. Paul explained many things to them. He talked about how God would rule everyone. He also talked about how various places in the Scriptures foretold that Jesus would come. Paul talked for that entire day with the people who had come to his house. ²⁴Paul was able to persuade some of those Jews that the things he said about Jesus were true. But some others would not believe that they were true. ²⁵The two groups argued with each other. When they were about to leave, Paul told them one more thing. He said, "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said something through Isaiah the prophet.

²⁶He said, 'Go to the people of Israel and say to them:

"You seem to be listening but you never really understand what God is saying.

You seem to be looking but you never really recognize the things that God is doing." ²⁷These people do not understand because they have become stubborn.

It is as if they have become deaf.

It is as if they have closed their eyes.

It is as if they have done this because they do not want to see well,

and they do not want to hear well,

and they do not want to understand well.

If they did pay attention to me and understand what I am telling them, they would stop sinning and live in the right way again.

If they did that, I would restore them.'

²⁸Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and many of them will accept his offer."

²⁹^[1] [When he had said these things, the Jews went away. They were having a great dispute among themselves.]

³⁰After that, Paul stayed in Rome for two whole years in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him. He received each of them gladly and spoke with them. ³¹He preached about how God would rule over everyone. He also taught people about the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He spoke about these things very openly. No one tried to stop him.

Romans

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter}. I serve the Messiah Jesus. He called me to represent him and specially chose me to proclaim God's good news. ²God previously promised this good news by means of his spokesmen who prophesied about it {and wrote it down} in the sacred writings. ³{This good news is} about God's Son. He was born a natural descendant of David. ⁴In accordance with the Holy Spirit, God powerfully demonstrated that Jesus is his Son by causing him to live again after he had died. {God's Son is} Jesus the Messiah, {who is} our Lord. ⁵Jesus favored us who represent him and authorized us to represent him on his behalf in order that all the nations would obey {God} by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. ⁶Jesus the Messiah has also called you who are {living} among the nations. ⁷{I am writing this letter} to all of you {believers} who dwell in the city of Rome. God loves you and has called you to be people who belong to him. {May} God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and make you peaceful.

⁸Now, {the} first {thing I want to tell you, is that} I am constantly thanking my God through Jesus the Messiah for all of you {believers in the Messiah}. {I thank him} because {people} throughout the known world are proclaiming how you trust {in Jesus}. ⁹{I can say this truthfully} because God testifies for me that I frequently pray for you. I serve him devotedly by proclaiming the good news about his Son{, Jesus}. ¹⁰{When} I pray, I very often request that I might finally succeed in coming to {visit} you because God wants {me to}. ¹¹{I pray for this} because I deeply desire to see you {in person} in order to share some kind of gracious gift with you from the Holy Spirit in order to help you become spiritually stronger. ¹²In other words, {I want to share some gracious gift with you} in order that we may mutually encourage one other. Both you and I can help each other by sharing how we mutually trust in God. ¹³My fellow believers, I certainly want you to know that I planned to visit you many times. But {God} has prevented me from visiting you until the present time. {I planned to visit you} in order to lead some people to believe in Christ among you as well, just like {how I have} also {done so} among the other nations. ¹⁴I am obligated {to proclaim the good news} to all non-Jewish people, whether or not they are {culturally} Greek and whether or not they are educated. ¹⁵So then, if it were my choice, I would gladly proclaim the good news to you who dwell in Rome.

¹⁶{I would gladly do this} because I am deeply honored to proclaim the good news because it is the powerful way that God uses to save anyone who believes {it}. {This is true for} both the Jews {who} first {heard the good news} and then everyone else. ¹⁷{This is true} because whenever {people proclaim} the good news, they reveal how God makes people righteous, which is entirely through trusting {in the Messiah}. This is what {the prophet Habakkuk meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "But the person whom God makes righteous will live forever by trusting {in God}."

¹⁸{This is true} because from where God dwells he is revealing how he is furious toward {and will judge} every person who does ungodly and unrighteous things. These people suppress the things that God says are true by living in an unrighteous manner.

¹⁹{God will judge them} because what anyone can know about God is obvious to these people since God has made it obvious to them. ²⁰{This is true} because people can clearly perceive those things about God that they cannot see {with their eyes}. {These things are} how powerful God is and the fact that he is God. {People could perceive these things} since the time God created the universe. The things that God has made have understood {these things}. For this reason, people cannot excuse themselves {from acknowledging that God exists}. ²¹{People cannot excuse themselves} because they do not honor him as God, even though they know that he exists. They also refuse to thank him. In contrast, they think about worthless things, and they are unable to understand spiritual things. ²²{Although} they assert that they are wise, they are {actually} fools. ²³They stop glorifying the God who is

immortal, and instead they glorify idols that resemble mortal people, birds, four-legged animals, and animals that crawl {on the ground}.

²⁴Consequently, God lets these people do the lustful things that they desire to do, so that they become {spiritually} impure and they disgrace their bodies with one another {by doing sexually immoral acts}. ²⁵These people stop believing what is true about God and instead believe what is false {about idols}. They reverently worship things that God has created, instead of {worshiping} {the God} who created those things. {He is the one} whom people should bless forever! May it be so!

²⁶Because {these people do that}, God lets them do the dishonorable things they strongly desire {to do}. For example, their women stop doing natural {sexual} acts {with men} and instead do unnatural {sexual} acts {with women}. ²⁷Similarly, the men also stopped doing natural {sexual} acts with women {and} lusted intensely after other men. These men do shameless {sexual} acts with each other. They experience God penalizing them in their own bodies. {God must penalize them} because they pervert {God's natural sexual acts}.

²⁸As these people thought that acknowledging God was worthless, God let their minds become worthless. As a result, they do inappropriate things. ²⁹{These people} are completely controlled by all kinds of unrighteous, wicked, covetous, and malicious {thoughts}. They are completely willing to be jealous, take another's life, argue, deceive, and commit evil deeds {against others}. They reveal secrets {about others}. ³⁰They speak badly of {other people}. They hate God. They act violently. They think too highly of themselves. They boast {about themselves}. They think of {new kinds of} evil things {to do}. They do not obey their parents. ³¹These people are {morally} foolish. They do not do what they promise to do. They do not care {about other people}. They do not show mercy {to others}.

³²These people fully understand that God has righteously declared that people who keep doing such {inappropriate} things deserve to die {spiritually}. {Nevertheless,} they not only keep on doing those {inappropriate} things, but they even happily approve of people who do such things!

Chapter 2

¹Consequently, any one of you who judges another person cannot excuse yourself {at all} {when God condemns you}. {This is} because you are actually condemning yourself when you judge someone else, since you who judge someone else do the exact same things {that they do}! ²Certainly, we acknowledge that God will correctly judge those people who continue doing such {inappropriate} things. ³You who judge the people who continue to do such {inappropriate} things while you do the exact same things yourself should certainly not think that you can escape when God judges you! ⁴You who despise {how} abundantly kind, tolerant, and patient God is must certainly know that God's kind acts {are meant to} cause you to repent. ⁵Instead, because you are stubborn and refuse to repent, you are causing God to punish you even more severely. {This will happen} when God punishes {sinners} and reveals how justly he judges.

⁶God will {justly} reward or punish everyone for whatever they do. ⁷Living eternally {is how God repays} those people who keep striving for God to glorify, honor, and preserve them {forever}. {They do this} by persisting in doing what is good. ⁸By contrast, God will fiercely punish those people who refuse to do what he says is true and right because they are selfishly ambitious. ⁹{God will cause} every human being who does what is evil to become distressed and troubled. {This will happen} especially to the Jew {who does what is evil} and also to everyone else {who does so}. ¹⁰By contrast, God will glorify, honor, and reconcile every person who does what is good. {This will happen} especially to the Jew {who does what is good} and also to everyone else {who does so}. ¹¹{These things are true} because God is impartial.

¹²{We know this about God,} because he will punish forever all people who sin without {knowing} the laws {that God gave the Jews} {even though} they do not know those laws. At the same time, God will judge according to his laws whoever sins while knowing those laws. ¹³{God will judge everyone who sins} because God does not make righteous those people who {only} hear his laws. Rather, God will make righteous those people who obey his laws. ¹⁴{God will judge everyone who sins} because whenever nations which do not know the laws {that God gave the

Jews} naturally obey rules from those laws, {they prove that} they know laws within their minds even though they do not know God's laws. ¹⁵{By naturally following some laws that God gave through Moses,} these people demonstrate that God has made each person aware of how to obey his laws. What they think shows that this is true, in that what each of them thinks will either accuse or even defend their actions. ¹⁶{This will happen} at the time when God {finally} judges the hidden thoughts that people think. {God's} good news that I proclaim teaches that he will judge {mankind} through the Messiah Jesus.

¹⁷Now, {I am addressing} you who identify yourselves as Jews: You depend on the laws {God gave you} {to avoid God's judgment}. You brag that you know God. ¹⁸You know what God wants. Also, since {some people} have taught you {God's law}, you approve of what is superior. ¹⁹You have even convinced yourselves that you {Jews} are the only ones who can teach those {non-Jewish people} who do not know {about God}. {You are convinced that} only you can enable ignorant people to understand {who God is}. ²⁰{You have convinced yourself that} you should instruct people who are foolish. {You have convinced yourself that} you should teach {people who are as ignorant as} infants. {You think this way} because you know the laws {God gave the Jews}, which fully contain what we can know and what is true. ²¹So {even though you Jews have convinced yourself that these things are true}, you should teach yourselves to do what you teach others to do {because you don't do those things}! You keep telling others that they should not steal, but you steal! ²²You keep telling {people} not to have sexual relations with people whom they did not marry, {but} you do so! You {supposedly} detest idols, {but} you ransack temples {that contain idols}! ²³You brag about {how well you understand} the laws {God gave you}, {but} you disgrace God by disobeying those laws! ²⁴{These things are true} because it is what {the prophet Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "The nations say bad things about God because of {how wickedly} you {Jews act}."

²⁵{You Jews who have sinned will be judged} because, being circumcised {only} benefits you if you obey the laws {God gave you}. However, if you disobey those laws, being circumcised does not benefit you at all. ²⁶So then, if uncircumcised people obey what God requires in the laws {he gave the Jews}, God will regard those uncircumcised people as being circumcised. ²⁷And people who are physically uncircumcised yet fully obey the laws {from God} will judge you {Jews}! Although {you know} the written rules {God gave the Jews} and you are circumcised, you have disobeyed those laws! ²⁸{This is true} because a {true} Jew is not someone who does Jewish rituals that people can see. {Similarly,} people cannot see {true} circumcision on a person's body. ²⁹Rather, a {true} Jew is one {by means of something} that people cannot see. {True} circumcision {happens} in a person's mind {and} the {Holy} Spirit does it. {Obeying} the written rules {God gave the Jews} cannot do it. God commends a true Jew, but other people do not.

Chapter 3

¹{You Jews might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely being a Jew is not advantageous! Surely being circumcised is not beneficial at all!" ²{Then I would say, "Being a Jew benefits a person} in many ways!" {This is} certainly {true} because, first of all, God trusted the Jews with preserving what he had said {in the Scriptures}. ³{So you might say,} "Some of these {Jews} were certainly unfaithful {to God}! How unfaithful those people are certainly cannot invalidate how faithful God is!" ⁴{Then I would say,} "Of course not!" On the contrary, God {is always} truthful, but everyone else is not. This is what {David meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "The result {of my sin} is that people will acknowledge that you{, God,} are right when you speak and victorious when people {try to} judge you."

⁵But {you might say,} "Suppose {this is true and} how unrighteous we {Jews} are {actually} confirms how righteous God is. {That} could not {possibly mean} that God is unrighteous because he punishes {us}!" (When I talk like this, I am expressing how human beings think.) ⁶{Then I would say,} "Of course not! If God were unrighteous when he punishes us, then he could not {possibly} judge {anyone in} the world!" ⁷But {then you might say,} "Suppose {this is true, and} my lying further glorifies God {and} how truthful he is. {If that is so,} then {surely} God should not still judge me as if I were sinning!" ⁸And {if this is true, then} you should {just} tell us to act wickedly in order that good things can happen!" (This is exactly what some people say falsely about me and claim that I say. It is right {for God} to condemn people {who speak and act} this way!)

⁹{You Jews might then say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then we are surely not superior {to non-Jewish people}!" {And I would say that} indeed we are not. {I say this} because I have previously charged that all Jews and non-Jewish people cannot stop being sinful. ¹⁰This is what {the prophets meant when} they wrote {in the Scriptures}, "No one is righteous, no one at all!"

¹¹"No one thinks wisely. No one is even trying to know God!

¹²Everyone has refused to obey {God}. As a whole, they are worthless {for doing what God wants}. No one is kind, no one at all!"

¹³"What people say is morally corrupt {like the smell of rotten corpses in} a grave! They constantly deceive {people} by what they say!" "What they say hurts people, like the venom of venomous snakes!" ¹⁴"They constantly curse {others} and speak harshly {against them}." ¹⁵"They rush eagerly to murder people. ¹⁶Wherever they go, they destroy lives and make people suffer. ¹⁷They do not understand how to live peacefully {with others}." ¹⁸"They do not fear God {at all}!"

¹⁹Certainly, we Jews know all that God says in his laws applies to {the Jews,} to whom God gave his laws. This is in order that no one can excuse themselves {from being judged by God.} {This is} also in order that God can justly punish everyone in the world as guilty. ²⁰{This is true} because God will not make anyone righteous with himself {simply} because they obey the laws {he gave the Jews}. {This is so} because those laws {only} make people aware of how sinful they are.

²¹But now God has revealed how he makes people righteous. {Becoming righteous} is not related to obeying the laws {God gave the Jews}. {Yet,} in what they wrote {in the Scriptures} Moses and the prophets testify {about how God makes people righteous}. ²²How God makes people righteous is by trusting in Jesus the Messiah. {God will make} all {types of} people {righteous} if they trust in {Jesus}. {This is} because God does not distinguish {between different types of people}. ²³{This is} because all {types of} people sin and fail to acquire the glorious status from God. ²⁴God makes {these sinful people} righteous as a gift because he is so kind. {People receive this gift from God} when God unites them to Jesus the Messiah, who redeemed them {from being punished for being sinful}. ²⁵God offered Jesus as the one who atones {for everyone's sins}. {People are rescued from being punished for being sinful} by trusting in his {sacrificial} death. {God did this} in order to show how God makes people righteous. {This happened} because God disregarded people's sinful acts that they had previously done. ²⁶{God did this} because he is so tolerant. {God also did this} in order to show how he makes people righteous during our time. {This is} for the purpose of showing that God is righteous and that he makes people righteous {if} they trust in Jesus.

²⁷{You Jews might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely no one can boast!" {Then I would say,} "Indeed, no one can!" {Then you might say,} "Surely {we can become righteous} by obeying the laws {God gave the Jews}! Surely doing {those things} {will make us righteous}!" {Then I would say,} "Absolutely not! On the contrary, {people become righteous} by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. ²⁸Indeed, we {Jewish Christians} consider people to become righteous by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. {Being righteous} is not related to doing those things {that God commanded} in the laws {he gave the Jews}." ²⁹{Or you might say,} "Surely God is not only the God of the Jews. Surely he is the God of {all} the nations too!" {So I would say,} "Absolutely! He is the God of {all} the nations too. ³⁰{This is true} because there is certainly {only} one God {for all people}. He will make righteous {both} the Jews who trust {in Jesus} and the non-Jewish people who trust in {Jesus}." ³¹{You Jews might say,} "Then surely we make the laws {God gave us} invalid by trusting in {Jesus}!" {So I would say,} "Of course not! On the contrary, we confirm that {what God said in} those laws is valid."

Chapter 4

¹{You Jews might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely our physical ancestor Abraham found out {about it}. ²{This must be true} because if Abraham became righteous based on doing the things {that God commanded in

his laws}, then he could brag {about it}." On the contrary, {I would say that} {Abraham could} not possibly {boast about it} to God! ³{I say this} because, {Moses} surely tells {us} in the Scriptures, "Abraham trusted in God, and God considered Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him." ⁴Indeed, when a person works, he does not consider the wage {he earns} to be a gracious gift. On the contrary, {that person considers the wage he earns} to be what his employer owes him. ⁵By contrast, when a person does not obey {the laws God gave the Jews}, but trusts in the God who can make unrighteous people righteous, God considers him to be righteous because he trusted in him. ⁶This is also the same thing that David wrote {in the Scriptures} about how blessed people are when God considers them to be righteous, even though they do not do those things {that God commanded}. {David wrote:}

⁷"People are so happy when God forgives their lawless acts! People are so happy when God no longer acknowledges their sinful acts! ⁸Any person whom the Lord never again considers to be sinful is so happy!"

⁹Therefore, these happy people are not only circumcised {Jews} but even uncircumcised people {who are not Jews}! {This must be true} because we {Jews} quote {the scripture that states,} "God considers Abraham to be righteous because he trusted {in him}." ¹⁰So then, {you surely know} when Abraham trusted in God and God considered {him to be righteous}! {You surely know whether this happened} before he was circumcised or afterward! {Indeed,} it was not while Abraham was circumcised, but while he was still uncircumcised {that God considered him to be righteous}. ¹¹Abraham was circumcised as a mark {in his body} to prove that God had made him righteous because Abraham trusted {in him} before he was circumcised. {This happened} in order for him to become the {spiritual} ancestor for every non-Jewish person who trusts in God in order that God would consider them to be righteous {because they trust in him}. ¹²{This} also {happened in order for Abraham to become} the {spiritual} ancestor of those people who are circumcised, that is, those circumcised {Jews} {who are not only circumcised in their bodies}, but who also trust in God the same way that our ancestor Abraham did even before he was circumcised.

¹³{This is true} because {when} God promised Abraham and those who descend from him that the {whole} world would belong to him, {God did not promise this} because {Abraham obeyed} the laws {God gave the Jews}. Rather, {God promised this} because God had made {Abraham} righteous because Abraham trusted {in him}. ¹⁴{This is true} because, if people could inherit {what God promised Abraham} by obeying the laws {he gave the Jews}, {then} trusting {in God} would become useless! What God promised would also become invalid. ¹⁵{This is} because the laws {God gave the Jews} are intended to punish {those who disobey them}. However, where God's laws do not exist, no one can disobey {them}. ¹⁶This is why what God promised comes by trusting in him in order to show how kind he is. {God was so kind} in order that he could secure what he promised to everyone who has {spiritually} descended {from Abraham}. {Those who have spiritually descended from Abraham} are not only those {Jews} who obey the laws {God gave them}, but also those who trust {in God} as Abraham did. Abraham is the {spiritual} ancestor of all of us {who trust in God}. ¹⁷{This is exactly what {God} said in the Scriptures {about Abraham}: "I have chosen you to be a {spiritual} ancestor for numerous people groups.") God considers {Abraham to be our spiritual ancestor}. Abraham trusted God. {God is the one} who causes dead people to become alive {again}. He also commands things that do not exist {to exist}, then they exist. ¹⁸Abraham trusted {in God} by hoping {in God} despite what seemed hopeless. As a result, he became the {spiritual} ancestor for numerous people groups. {This happened} just as God had promised {him} {in the Scriptures}: "The people who descend from you will become as numerous {as the stars in the sky}." ¹⁹Abraham thought that his body was too old to produce children. (He was almost 100 years old!) {He also thought} that {his wife} Sarah was unable to become pregnant {because she never had been able to do so before}. {Nevertheless,} Abraham kept on trusting {God}. ²⁰Indeed, Abraham did not faithlessly doubt what God had promised. On the contrary, God empowered Abraham to continue trusting {in him} while Abraham was glorifying God. ²¹God also totally assured Abraham that he is able to do what he had promised {to do}. ²²And this is why, "God considered Abraham to be righteous because he trusted in him."

²³Yet, when {Moses} wrote {in the Scriptures}, "God considered how Abraham trusted {him}," {these words} not only refer to Abraham. ²⁴On the contrary, {these words} also refer to us {who trust in Jesus}. God is going to consider how we {believers} trust {him}. {We are} the people who trust him. {He is} the one who caused our Lord Jesus to become alive again after he had died. ²⁵God allowed people to kill Jesus because we sinned {against God}. {God} also caused Jesus to become alive again in order to make us righteous.

Chapter 5

¹Consequently, we should live peacefully with God by means of {what} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {did for us} because we have become righteous by trusting {in Jesus}. ²Our Lord Jesus the Messiah also allows us to continually experience how kind God is by trusting in Jesus. We can confidently boast that we will share in God's glorious status. ³This is not the only thing {about which we can confidently boast}. Rather, we can also confidently boast about the painful things {that we have experienced}. {We can do this} because we know that a painful thing {that we experience} causes us to endure {hardships better than before}. ⁴And being able to endure {hardships} results in {God} approving {us}. And {when God} approves {us, we become more} confident. ⁵And when we become confident, we will not be disappointed. {This is} because the Holy Spirit has enabled us to deeply understand {how much} God loves us. God has given us this Holy Spirit.

⁶In fact, while we were still helpless, {Jesus} the Messiah died for the sake of {us} impious people. {God caused this to happen} at just the right time. ⁷Indeed, someone would rarely consider dying for the sake of a person who is righteous, although someone might possibly even bravely consider dying for the sake of a good person. ⁸However, God shows his own love towards we {believers} by this fact: while we were still sinful, {Jesus} the Messiah died for our benefit! ⁹Consequently, since the Messiah's {sacrificial} death has already made us righteous, it is even more certain that he will rescue us when God {finally} punishes {sinners}! ¹⁰Indeed, God's Son {Jesus} died to reconcile us to God while we were {still} {his} enemies. Therefore, since Jesus has {already} reconciled us to God, it is even more certain that he will rescue us {when God punishes sinners} because he is alive {again}! ¹¹Now these are not the only things {God does for us}. Rather, we also boast about God by means of {what} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {has done for us}. Jesus has already reconciled us {with God}!

¹²So then, sin started existing in the world because one man sinned, and {living things started} to die because he sinned. In the same way, everyone started dying as well, because everyone sins. ¹³Indeed, people throughout the world sinned before {God gave his} laws {to the Jews}. However, God did not legally regard what they did as sinning, since those laws did not yet exist {to identify what it means to sin}. ¹⁴However, everyone died from {the time of the first man} Adam until {the time of} Moses. Even those people died who did not sin by violating the same command God gave to Adam. Adam is like the person who would come {later}. ¹⁵But what God has kindly given {us} is not the same as how Adam rejected {God's command}. In fact, it is true that many people died because the one man {Adam} rejected {God's command}. {But} how kind God is and that which God kindly gives through the one man Jesus the Messiah extend to many people {and are} much greater! ¹⁶Yet, what God gives is not like {what happened} because the one man {Adam} sinned. {This is true} because, in fact, God judged {everyone} after the sinful thing {that Adam did}, which resulted in God condemning {everyone}. By contrast, what God kindly gave {people} after they rejected {his commands} many {times} resulted in God making them righteous. ¹⁷Indeed, since everyone died because the one man {Adam} rejected {God's command}, it is even more certain that those {people} who accept how abundantly kind God is and {are those people whom} he makes righteous will live in control {of themselves}. {This will happen} because of {what} Jesus the Messiah {has done}.

¹⁸Therefore, in the way that God condemned everyone because {Adam} rejected {God's command}, in the same way, God makes everyone righteous, which results in {them} living eternally, because of the righteous act that {Jesus} did. ¹⁹Indeed, in the same way that people became sinful because the one man {Adam} disobeyed {God}, in the same way many people will become righteous because the one man {Jesus} obeyed {God}. ²⁰Yet {God} added {his} laws in order that people might reject {his commands} even more. Nevertheless, whenever people began to sin even more, then even more God showed how kind he is! ²¹{This happened} so that God could be gracious to people by making them righteous. Just as being sinful controlled people by making them die, in the same way, when God makes people righteous, they live forever. {This is} because of {what} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {has done}.

Chapter 6

¹{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely we {believers} should keep on sinning in order that, even more, God might show how kind he is even more!" ²{Then I would say,} "Of course not!" We who are no longer controlled by sinning surely must not continue living sinfully! ³You surely know that God unites to the Messiah Jesus whomever someone baptizes, and it is as if that baptized person also died with the Messiah! ⁴So, by being baptized as if we died with {the Messiah}, it is like God buried us {in the tomb} with {Jesus}. {This is so} in order that, just as God the Father's glorious power caused the Messiah to become alive again after he had died, in the same way, we too can live a new way of living. ⁵Indeed, since we share in what resembles Jesus dying, we will surely also share in God making us alive again. ⁶We know that God {also} did away with our former {sinful} way of living when people crucified Jesus. {He did this} in order to totally remove the way sin controls us, so that we no longer have to live sinfully. ⁷{This is} because, when people {who live sinfully} share in {Jesus's} death, God frees them from having to live sinfully. ⁸Now since {it is as if} we died with the Messiah, we trust that we will also live with him {eternally}. ⁹We know that the Messiah can never die again, because God caused him to become alive again after he had died. Nothing can ever cause the Messiah to die again! ¹⁰{This is} because when Jesus died, he only had to die that one time only in order to remove {the way} sin {controls people}. Now that he is alive {again}, he lives in order to glorify God. ¹¹Similarly, you too regard yourselves as no longer controlled by sinning. Indeed, {regard yourselves} as alive in order to glorify God because God has united you to the Messiah Jesus. ¹²Since this is true, do not allow your sinful desires to control you. {This would} result in you doing {the sinful things} that you want to do. ¹³Do not use your body parts in order to do unrighteous things {or} to sin. Instead, live in order to do what God wants you to do, like people whom God caused to live again after they had died. Also, use your body parts in order to do righteous things to glorify God. ¹⁴Indeed, do not allow your desire to sin to control you because the laws {God gave the Jews} do not control you. Instead, how kind God is controls you.

¹⁵{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely we {believers} should keep on sinning because the laws {God gave the Jews} do not control us. Instead, how kind God is controls us!" {Then I would say,} "Of course not!" ¹⁶You surely know that if you submit yourselves to be controlled by a thing or person, you become like slaves to that thing or person you submit to! {This is true} whether you submit yourselves to living sinfully, which will kill you {eternally}, or you submit yourselves to God, which will make you righteous. ¹⁷Although you used to submit yourselves to living sinfully, {now} you are sincerely submissive to the type of teaching to which God has submitted you. Thank God! ¹⁸Indeed, since God liberated you from living sinfully, you are {now} serving {God} righteously. ¹⁹{I {Paul} am speaking in human terms, because you are spiritually immature.} Indeed, just as you {previously} used your body parts to live impurely and to increasingly break God's laws, in the same way, now use your body parts to live righteously. {This will cause you} to live like God's people should live. ²⁰{This is} because when you used to submit yourselves to living sinfully, you were not living righteously. ²¹So, formerly you did not benefit from those {sinful} things {you did} that now embarrass you. {This is because} those things will eventually kill {you} {eternally}. ²²But now {that you trust in Jesus}, God has freed you from living sinfully and has caused you to serve him the way slaves would serve him. Therefore, you receive what is beneficial, which results in you living like God's people should live. Indeed, {living in that way} will eventually result in you living eternally. ²³{I say this} because living sinfully causes those who do so to die {eternally}, but God graciously causes those who are united to our Lord, the Messiah Jesus, to live eternally.

Chapter 7

¹My fellow {Jewish} believers, you are well-aware that the laws {God gave the Jews} must be obeyed by {Jewish} people throughout their whole lives. ({I know that you are well-aware of this fact}, because I am speaking to people who are familiar with the laws {God gave the Jews}.) ²For instance, according to the laws {God gave the Jews}, a married woman must remain married to her husband as long as he lives. However, if her husband dies, {God's} law no longer requires her to remain married to him. ³Therefore, if she marries another man while her husband is alive, {according to God's law} she will be an adulterous woman. However, if her husband dies, she no longer has to

obey {what} God's law {requires of those who are married}. As a result, she would not be an adulterous woman if she married another man. ⁴So, my fellow {Jewish} believers, by means of the Messiah dying {on the cross} the laws {God gave the Jews} no longer control you. {God did this} in order to unite you to the Messiah, {as if you were marrying a new husband}. He is the person whom God made alive again after he had died. {God did this} in order that we may do things that please him. ⁵Indeed, when living sinfully used to control us, the laws {God gave us} caused us to want to sin even more. {Our living sinfully} controlled what we did with our body parts. As a result, we would {eventually} die {eternally}. ⁶But now {that we trust in Jesus}, God cancels what his laws require {us to do}. The laws {God gave the Jews} no longer control us as if we were prisoners. As a result, we now serve God in the new way that comes from the {Holy} Spirit. {We} no longer {serve God} in the old way that the written rules {God gave the Jews} require.

⁷{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely the laws {God gave the Jews} are sinful!" {Then I would say,} "Of course not!" On the contrary, without the laws {God gave the Jews}, I would never have become aware of {what it means to} sin. For instance, if God did not say in his laws, "You must not covet," I would never have become aware of {what it means to} covet. ⁸However, since I am sinful, I wanted to covet in many ways because I knew that {God} commanded {us not to covet}. {This is} because if the laws {God gave the Jews} did not exist, living sinfully would cease. ⁹There was a time when I was living without being aware of the laws {God gave the Jews}. But, when I became aware of those commandments, I wanted to sin even more. ¹⁰I became {spiritually} dead. God's command was supposed to result in me living {eternally}. But God's command actually will result in me dying {eternally}. ¹¹{This is so} because {I} wanted to sin even more because I knew what God had commanded. When I sinned, I tricked myself. Then {disobeying} what God had commanded killed me {spiritually}. ¹²So the laws {God gave the Jews} are worthy of God and what God has commanded is worthy of God, just, and good.

¹³So, {God's laws}, which are good, surely did not cause me to die {spiritually}! Of course not! Rather, living sinfully did so. {This happened} so that {God's} good {laws} would reveal how sinful it is to live sinfully. {This also happened} so that what God commands would reveal that living sinfully is utterly sinful.

¹⁴{This is true} because we are {all} aware that the laws {God gave the Jews} are from God's Spirit. But as for me, I am {spiritually} weak. {It is as if} I must serve as a slave to living sinfully. ¹⁵{This is true} because I do not comprehend what I do! Indeed, I keep on doing what I do not want to do. But I do what I hate {that I do}. ¹⁶Now because I do what I do not want {to do}, {this proves that} I agree with the laws {God gave the Jews}. {I also testify} that they are good {laws}. ¹⁷This means that now I am no longer the one who causes me to do {these sinful things}. Rather, my wanting to live sinfully causes me {to do them}. ¹⁸Indeed, I am aware that I am not good {at all}. In other words, my sinful self {is not good at all}. {This is true} because, even though I really want to do {what is good}, I am unable to do so. ¹⁹Indeed, I do not do the good things I want {to do}. Rather, I keep on doing evil things that I do not want {to do}. ²⁰Now because I do what I do not want {to do}, I am no longer the one who causes me to do {these sinful things}. Rather, my wanting to live sinfully causes me {to do them}. ²¹Consequently, I realized that a principle exists: I keep on doing evil things, {even though} I really want to do good things. ²²{This is true} because the laws God gave {the Jews} make my mind rejoice. ²³Yet, I notice another principle that controls what I do with my body parts. {This principle} conflicts with the {other} principle that my mind {accepts}. It also controls me, making me its prisoner by means of the principle that I tend to live sinfully. {Living sinfully} controls what I do with my body parts. ²⁴I am truly a wretched person! {I feel as though there is no one} who could {possibly} rescue me from this body that kills me! ²⁵I thank God {who rescued me} by means of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Therefore, I actually do obey with my mind the laws God gave {the Jews}. Yet {at the same time} with my sinful self {I obey} the principle that I tend to live sinfully.

Chapter 8

¹So now, God absolutely does not condemn anyone whom he has united with the Messiah Jesus. ²{This is true} because the principle that pertains to the life-giving Holy Spirit has caused you {believers} to no longer be controlled by the principle that causes people to sin and die {eternally}. {It did this} by uniting you with the Messiah

Jesus. ³Indeed, God {accomplished} what the laws {he gave the Jews} could not accomplish, because they could not prevent people from living sinfully. Through {the crucifying of} {his Son's} body, God removed {how} sinning {controls people}. {He did this} by sending his own Son {Jesus} {to the world} in a human body {that was} like the bodies of sinful people. {God sent his Son} in order to {remove} that which causes man to sin. ⁴{God did these things} so that we {believers} could do the righteous acts that the laws {he gave the Jews} required. We can live as people whom living sinfully does not control. Rather, {we can live as people} whom the {Holy} Spirit controls. ⁵{This is true} because those {people} whom living sinfully controls think about those things that are related to living sinfully. However, those people whom the {Holy} Spirit controls think about those things that are related to the {Holy} Spirit. ⁶Indeed, focusing on living sinfully will cause {a person} to die {eternally}. However, focusing on the {Holy} Spirit will cause {a person} to live {eternally and} peacefully. ⁷{This is true} because {people} who focus on living sinfully are God's enemies. {This is} because they do not voluntarily obey the laws God gave {the Jews}; they are incapable {of doing so}. ⁸But those whom living sinfully controls are incapable of pleasing God. ⁹By contrast, you {believers} are not those whom living sinfully controls. Rather, you are those whom the {Holy} Spirit controls because God's Spirit really does reside within you. But if some person does not possess Jesus the Messiah's Spirit, this person does not belong to the Messiah. ¹⁰Now, since the Messiah resides within you {believers}, the {Holy} Spirit gives {you} {eternal} life because he has made you righteous. {This is true} even though your bodies will die because you sin. ¹¹The {Holy} Spirit does indeed reside within you. {He came} from God, who caused Jesus to become alive again after he had died. {Since this is true,} God, who caused the Messiah Jesus to become alive again after he had died, will also cause your physical bodies to become alive {again} by his Spirit. This {Spirit} resides within you.

¹²Therefore, {my} fellow believers, we are obligated. {But we are not obligated} to live sinfully, {which means} to live like those whom living sinfully controls. ¹³Indeed, if you live like those whom living sinfully controls, you will die {eternally}. However, if the {Holy} Spirit enables you to stop doing what is sinful with your bodies, you will live {eternally}.

¹⁴{This is} because those people whom God's Spirit guides are God's {spiritual} children. ¹⁵Indeed, God has not given you {believers} an enslaved mind to terrify you, such as you had before. Rather, God has given you the Holy Spirit to {spiritually} adopt you {as his children}. {It is} the Holy Spirit who enables us to cry out, "Abba, my Father!" ¹⁶The {Holy} Spirit personally testifies, along with our own minds, that we are God's {spiritual} children. ¹⁷Since we are {God's spiritual} children, we are also those who will inherit {blessings from God}. We inherit {blessings from God himself} and also together with the Messiah {Jesus}. {This is true} only if we keep suffering together with the Messiah in order for God to also glorify us together with the Messiah.

¹⁸Indeed, I regard what we {believers in the Messiah} suffer at this time as being incomparable to what glorious things God will reveal to us {in the future}. ¹⁹Indeed, what God created is very eagerly waiting for {the time} when God reveals whom his {spiritual} children are. ²⁰{This is} because God subjugated what he created so that it became useless. {What God created} did not want this to happen. Rather, {God subjugated what he created} because he wanted to {do so}. {He did this} to keep {the creation} confidently expecting ²¹that God would also enable what he created to stop decaying and let it freely experience the same glorious status that belongs to his {spiritual} children. ²²Indeed, we are aware that, {even} at the present time, everything God has created keeps groaning and suffering together {like a mother experiencing pain before bearing a child}. ²³{It is} not only {what God created that groans}! On the contrary, even we ourselves who possess the {Holy} Spirit as the first portion {from God} feel suffering. {We feel this way} while we eagerly wait for God to {spiritually} adopt us, which will be when God redeems our bodies. ²⁴{This is so} because God rescued us while we confidently expect this. If we {already} had what we have been confidently expecting, then we would have nothing to confidently expect. {This is} because surely nobody confidently expects something that he {already} has. ²⁵Yet, if we keep on confidently expecting what we do not yet have, then we will keep on eagerly waiting for it while persevering.

²⁶The {Holy} Spirit similarly also assists us because we are weak. {This is} because we are not aware for what we should pray. However, the {Holy} Spirit personally pleads on our behalf by groaning without speaking words. ²⁷Now God is the one who investigates what we think and feel. He is aware of what the {Holy} Spirit intends, because the Spirit pleads for the sake of God's people according to {what} God {wants}.

²⁸We are certain that God makes all things that happen to benefit those who love him. {They are} the people whom God called because he previously planned {to do so}. ²⁹{This is} because those whom God chose in advance, he also decided in advance to make resemble his Son {Jesus}. {God did these things} in order for his Son {Jesus} to have first place among many {spiritual} siblings. ³⁰Certainly, the people whom God chose in advance {to become his people}, he also summoned to become his people. And those people whom God summoned {to become his people}, he also made righteous. And those people whom God made righteous, he will also make glorious.

³¹{Since these things are true,} then we should say this about them: since God supports us, surely no one {is powerful enough} to oppose us! ³²God did not even spare his own Son, {Jesus}. On the contrary, God handed him over {to die} for the sake of us all. So God surely will also graciously give us, along with Jesus, every {blessing}!

³³Surely no one can {rightly} accuse those whom God chose {to become his people}! {This is because} God is the one who makes people righteous. ³⁴Surely no one can condemn {God's people}! {This is because} the Messiah Jesus is the one who died. Furthermore, he is the one whom God made alive again. He is also at the place of highest honor next to God, and he even pleads for our sake. ³⁵Surely no one can make Jesus stop loving us! If people trouble us or distress us or persecute us, or if we are hungry or naked or in danger, or if people kill us with swords, surely none of those things can make Jesus stop loving us! ³⁶This is what {God meant when} he said {in the Scriptures}, "They constantly kill us because of you{, God}. They consider us to be like sheep for them to slaughter." ³⁷However, he who loved us enables us to completely overcome all of these things {that might happen to us}. ³⁸In fact, God has persuaded me that {none of these things}—whether being dead, or what happens while we are alive, or angels, or demons who rule, or things that are happening to us, or things that will happen to us, or powerful demons, ³⁹or what is above {us}, or what is below {us}, or anything else that God created—can stop God from loving us! {God loves us} because we are united to the Messiah Jesus, our Lord!

Chapter 9

¹I speak what is true as one whom God has united with the Messiah. I do not speak what is false. The Holy Spirit confirms what my conscience testifies within myself {when I say} ²that I grieve very greatly and constantly! ³{I do so} because I truly wish that God would curse me and completely alienate me from {Jesus} the Messiah for my fellow {kinsmen} {to be saved}! They are physically related to me. ⁴These {kinsmen of mine} are the Israelites. {They are those} whom God {spiritually} adopted. God allowed them to experience how glorious he is. God made covenants with them. God gave them his laws. God gave them the way to worship him. God also made promises to them. ⁵{Our Jewish} forefathers {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob} were Israelites. The Messiah is also one of them, as someone physically related to them. The Messiah rules over everything. {He is} the blessed God forever. May it be so!

⁶Yet God has not failed to do what he promised {to the Israelites}. {This is true} because not all people who have physically descended from Israel are {true} Israelites. ⁷{It is} also not {true} that all those who physically descended {from Abraham} are Abraham's {true} offspring. Rather, {as God says to Abraham in the Scriptures,} "I will identify your {true} offspring through {those who descend from} Isaac." ⁸In other words, the people who {only} physically descended {from Abraham} are not God's {spiritual} children. Rather, those {who became God's spiritual} children as a result of what God promised are regarded as {Abraham's true spiritual} offspring. ⁹Indeed, this is what God promised {would happen} {when he said in the Scriptures}, "At a set time, I will come. As a result, Sarah will give birth to a son." ¹⁰This is not the only {promise God made}. But {God made a promise} also when Rebekah became pregnant by this same man, Isaac. {He is} the ancestor of us {Israelites}. ¹¹Indeed, {God chose only one of her two sons} even though she had not yet born them and they had not yet done anything right or wrong. {God did this} in order that what he had previously planned with regard to choosing {people} would happen. ¹²{God did not choose only one of her sons} because of what he did. Rather, it was because God summons {those whom he chooses}. {This is why} God told Rebekah {in the Scriptures}, "Your older son will become a slave to your younger son." ¹³This is what {God meant when} he said {in the Scriptures}, "I love {the younger son} Jacob, but I emphatically reject {the older son} Esau."

¹⁴{Someone might say,} {"If what you have said is true,} then surely God must be unrighteous!" {Then I would say,} "Of course not!" ¹⁵{We know that God is truly righteous} because God told Moses {in the Scriptures}, "I will be merciful to whomever I want to be merciful. I will be compassionate to whomever I want to be compassionate." ¹⁶Therefore, {who receives God's mercy does} not {depend} on {how much} someone desires {to receive it}. {Who receives God's mercy} also does not depend on {how much} effort someone exerts. Rather, {it depends on} what God wants. {He is} the one who is merciful. ¹⁷Indeed, this is what God told Pharaoh in the Scriptures, "I allowed you {to become king in Egypt} for this exact reason: in order that I could use you to exhibit how powerful I am. I also {allowed you to become king} in order that I will be famous all over the world." ¹⁸Therefore, God is merciful to whomever he wants {to be merciful}. But he makes stubborn whomever he wants {to become stubborn}.

¹⁹As a result {of what I have said,} one of you may tell me, {"If what you have said is true,} then surely God should not blame people {for doing what they do}! {God should not do that} because no one can ever stop him from doing whatever he wants {to do}!" ²⁰{Then I would say,} "You {mere} human! You who argue with God are truly not worthy {to do so}! Who God has made surely must not say to God who made him, 'You should not have made me to be like this!'" ²¹{God can surely do whatever he wants to do with what he has made. In the same way,} someone who makes containers can do whatever he wants to do with his materials. From the same material he can make both containers for special use and containers for ordinary use. ²²Now, {you should surely not argue with God} because he very patiently endured those people whom he would punish {and} had prepared to destroy {eternally}. {He endured them} because he wanted to show how angry he is and to reveal how powerful he is. ²³{God} also {endures those whom he will punish} in order to reveal how abundantly glorious he is to those people to whom he will be merciful. God has previously arranged to glorify these people {eternally}. ²⁴We are also {among those people to whom God is merciful and} whom God has summoned. {God summons people} from {among} Jewish people and even from {among} non-Jewish people. ²⁵In the same way, God also told Hosea {in the Scriptures}, "I will give the name 'My people' to people who were not my people. I will also give the name 'Loved one' to the person whom I did not love."

²⁶{God also told Hosea,} "Then it will happen, in the {exact} same location where I previously told them, 'You are not my people,' I will give them the name, 'Children of God who lives.'"

²⁷Indeed, {elsewhere in the Scriptures} Isaiah shouts out about {the people} of Israel, "Even though there were as many Israelites as there are grains of sand along the seashore, God will refrain from punishing {only} a few of them. ²⁸{This is} because the Lord will fully and swiftly accomplish what he promised {to do} on the earth."

²⁹{It is} also just like Isaiah previously said {in the Scriptures}, "Unless the Lord, who rules over angel armies, had preserved offspring for us {Israelites}, he would have utterly destroyed us like he destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah."

³⁰{Since these things are true}, we should surely say that {although} the nations are not trying to be righteous, {they} became righteous. {However,} they became righteous by trusting {God}. ³¹By contrast, {the people of} Israel tried to obey the laws {God gave them} in order to become righteous. {But} they could not become righteous by {obeying} those laws. ³²The reason why {the people of Israel could not become righteous} is that they did not {try to become righteous} by trusting {God}. Instead, they tried to become righteous by working {for it}. {Because of this} {the Messiah offended them when he came}. It is as if the Messiah is a stone that causes them to trip. ³³This is what {God meant when} he had {Isaiah} write {in the Scriptures}, "Pay attention! I am placing in Jerusalem {someone who is like} a stone that trips {people} and a rock that offends {people}. But God will not humiliate {anyone} who trusts in that person."

Chapter 10

¹My fellow believers, I strongly desire {that God will save the Israelites}. I also pray for him {to save} them! ²{This is} because I personally confirm that they are zealous about God. However, {they are} not {zealous} based on fully knowing {God}. ³{This is} because they are not aware of how God makes people righteous, and they try to make

themselves righteous. {This is why} they refuse to subject themselves to the way God makes people righteous.

⁴{They were wrong to try to make themselves righteous}, because {Jesus} the Messiah has ended the laws {that God gave the Jews}. {Christ did this} in order for God to make righteous anyone who trusts {in Jesus}.

⁵Indeed, this is what Moses wrote {in the Scriptures} about being righteous by {obeying} the laws {God gave the Jews}: "The person who obeys {all} {God's} laws {perfectly} will live {eternally} by doing so." ⁶However, this is what {Moses} said {in the Scriptures} about people becoming righteous by trusting {in God}, "Do not say to yourselves, 'Surely no one can go up to heaven!'" (This refers to trying to make the Messiah come down {to the earth}.)

⁷{Moses} also {said not to say,} "Surely no one can go down into the bottomless pit!" (This refers to trying to make the Messiah become alive again after he had died.) ⁸However, {Moses also} said this {in the Scriptures} {about people becoming righteous by trusting in God}, "You can easily know what God said. You can proclaim it and know it personally." This refers to what God said about trusting {in him}. {This is what} we {believers in the Messiah} keep announcing. ⁹{What we keep announcing is} that God will save {any of} you who verbally acknowledges that Jesus is the Lord {over all things} and {personally} trusts that God made Jesus become alive again after he had died.

¹⁰{This is true} because God makes righteous anyone who personally trusts {in Jesus}, and he saves anyone who verbally acknowledges {that Jesus is the Lord}. ¹¹Indeed, this is {what God} said in the Scriptures, "God will not humiliate {anyone} who trusts in that person." ¹²Indeed, the Lord {Jesus} does not discriminate between Jewish people and non-Jewish people. {This is} because {Jesus} is the same Lord {who rules} over everyone. He generously blesses all people who call out to him {to save them}. ¹³Indeed, {Joel wrote in the Scriptures,} "God will save all people who call out to the Lord {to save them}."

¹⁴So, people certainly will not call out {for the Lord Jesus to save them} {if} they do not trust {in him}. And people certainly will not trust {in Jesus} {if} they have not heard {about him}. And people certainly will not hear {about Jesus} {if} someone does not proclaim {to them who he is}. ¹⁵And certainly people would not proclaim {to other people who Jesus is} unless someone sends them out! This is what {Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "It is a beautiful thing when people go and declare {to other people} the good news about good things!" ¹⁶However, not all {Jews} accepted the good news {about Jesus}. Indeed, this is what Isaiah {meant when} he said {in the Scriptures}, "Lord, no one trusts what we say!" ¹⁷So then, {a person can only} trust {in Jesus} by hearing {about him}. And {a person can only} hear {about Jesus} through {hearing} the message {that is about} the Messiah. ¹⁸However, this is what I say, "The Jews most definitely heard {the message}!" It is a fact. {As David wrote in the Scriptures,} "{The heavenly bodies are like witnesses and} everyone throughout the entire world could hear what they said."

¹⁹This is also what I say, "{The people of} Israel most definitely understood {the message}!" {God} first said through Moses {in the Scriptures}, "I will {personally} make you envious and angry by {using} a nation that does not {belong to me} and does not {even} know {me}." ²⁰Moreover, {God} quite boldly declared through Isaiah {in the Scriptures}, "I revealed myself to those {non-Jewish people} who were not interested in knowing me and did not {even} ask about me."

²¹However, {God} told {the people of} Israel {in the Scriptures}, "I am always inviting {you} to know me, {but you} {constantly} disobey and oppose {me}!"

Chapter 11

¹Since {these things are true}, this is what I say, "God certainly has not rejected his people, the Israelites!" Of course not! {I know this is true} because I too am one of the Israelites. I descended from Abraham. {More specifically, I descended} from the tribe that descended from Benjamin. ²God did not discard his people. {They are the people} whom he chose in advance. You certainly are aware of what the Prophet Elijah said in the Scriptures when he appealed to God against the people of Israel! ³{Elijah said,} "Lord, the people of Israel murdered {all of} your prophets {except for me}! They demolished {all of} your altars! I am the very last {prophet} who is still alive! Now, they are trying to kill me {too}!" ⁴However, this is how God replied to Elijah, "I have kept alive 7,000 men for my purposes. These men have not worshipped {the false god} Baal." ⁵So, similarly, at this time some faithful Israelites

also remain. {This is} because God has graciously chosen them {to remain}. ⁶Yet because {God chooses his people} based on how gracious he is, {God} does not {choose his people} based on what they do. {If God chose people based on what they do,} then how gracious he is would not {really} be gracious.

⁷So this is what we should conclude: Although {the people of} Israel keep trying to make themselves righteous, they cannot do so. Instead, those whom God {graciously} chose {from them} became righteous. But God made stubborn those people of Israel whom he did not {graciously} choose. ⁸This is exactly {what God meant when he wrote} in the Scriptures, "God caused the people of Israel to not think properly. Until this present day, God has made them completely unable to understand {how to become righteous}." ⁹David also stated {in the Scriptures}, "{O God}, make the luxurious way they live punish them completely {like a hunter catches an animal} in a net or trap! {Make the luxurious way they live} cause them to sin and pay them back {for sinning}!"

¹⁰Make them unable to understand! Make them suffer like slaves forever!"

¹¹Since {these things are true}, this is what I say, "The Jewish people were certainly not offended in order that God would completely reject them!" Of course not! Rather, God saves non-Jewish people because the Jewish people disobeyed {him}. This happened in order for God to make the Jewish people envious {of non-Jewish people who know him}. ¹²Indeed, God used how the Jewish people disobeyed {him and} failed {to make themselves righteous} to abundantly bless people from all the nations in the whole world. So, {when} the complete amount of {faithful} Jewish people {become righteous}, there will be even greater blessings!

¹³But now I am speaking to you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus}. God indeed made me his representative to non-Jewish people. Therefore, I show how glorious is what I do to minister {to non-Jewish people}. ¹⁴If possible, I want to make those who I am physically related to, the Jews, envious {of the non-Jewish people who know God}, so that God will save some of them. ¹⁵Indeed, God is reconciling with {people in} the world as a result of him rejecting the Jewish people. So, when God accepts the Jewish people, it will result in God making alive those who are dead.

¹⁶Indeed, because {the ancestors of the Jewish people belong to God, just like} the first portion {of a lump of dough} belongs to God, {all the Jewish people belong to God, just like} that whole lump of dough {belongs to God}. Also, because {the ancestors of the Jewish people belonged to God, just like} the root {of an olive tree} belongs to God, {all the Jewish people belong to God, just like} the branches of that {same} tree {belong to God}.

¹⁷Indeed, {God has removed some of the Jewish people from his people, as} a farmer breaks {unfruitful} branches off {of an olive tree}. But, {God has made} you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} {part of his people, as} a farmer grafts wild olive branches into {a cultivated tree}. {You} also {share together in benefitting from being part of God's people, as} grafted branches share in the nutrition in the olive tree root. ¹⁸Therefore, you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} must not boast against the {Jewish people whom God removed, even though they are like} broken off branches! If you do boast, {you must realize that} you indeed do not sustain the Jewish people. Rather, {they sustain} you, as the root sustains {the branches}! ¹⁹So then, you might say, "{God removed some of the Jewish people from his people, as} a farmer breaks {unfruitful} branches off {of a tree}. {God did this} in order that {he could join} me {to his people, as} a farmer grafts a branch into {a tree}." ²⁰I would reply by saying that} what you said is correct. {God removed} some of the Jewish people {from being his people, as} a farmer breaks off {unfruitful} branches because they were unfaithful. However, you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} remain {part of God's people} by trusting {in him}. Do not arrogantly think {that you are better than unbelieving Jewish people}! Rather, fear {God!} ²¹{You should fear God} because he did not show pity to the {faithless Jewish people, who are like} natural branches. So, he will not show pity to you {non-Jewish people} {if you stop trusting in Jesus}!

²²Since {this is true}, pay attention to how kind and severe God can be! God acts severely toward those who stop trusting in him. However, God will act kindly toward you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} if you continue accepting how kind he is. But, if you do not {do this}, {God will reject you, like} a farmer cuts an {unfruitful} branch off of a tree! ²³However, if those faithless Jewish people believe {in Jesus}, God will allow them to {rejoin his people, just as} a farmer grafts {branches} into {a tree}. {This is} because God is powerful enough to rejoin the Jewish people {to his people}. ²⁴Indeed, {God removed} you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus from the nations and joined you to his people, as} a farmer cuts off a branch from a naturally wild olive tree and grafts it into a cultivated

olive tree, {even though doing so is} not natural. Since {this is true}, {God} will certainly {join Israelites back into his people, just as} a farmer grafts a naturally cultivated olive branch back into its own tree.

²⁵{I say this} because I really want you, my {non-Jewish} fellow believers, to know what God had previously hidden {from people}, so that you do not become arrogant. {God had previously hidden from people the fact} that some of {the people of} Israel will stubbornly oppose {him} until all the non-Jewish people God has chosen have joined his people. ²⁶Then, in the same way, God will save all {of the people of} Israel. This is what {Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "God will send from Jerusalem someone to rescue {his people}. {That man} will make {the descendants of} Jacob stop being ungodly."

²⁷{God says,} "This is the agreement that I will make with the descendants of Jacob, when I forgive {them for the} sinful things {that they have done}."

²⁸With regard to {Jewish people rejecting} the good news, they are enemies {of God} for your benefit. However, with regard to {God} choosing {Jewish people}, God loves them for the sake of {what he promised} their ancestors.

²⁹{This is true} because God does not revoke the things he graciously gives. {He} also {does not revoke} {the people whom} he summons {to be his people}. ³⁰Indeed, {it is} just as you {non-Jewish people who trust in Jesus} used to disobey God, but now God has been merciful to you because the Jewish people disobeyed {him}. ³¹In the same way, the Jewish people also are now disobeying {God} because God has been merciful to you {non-Jewish people}. {This happened} in order for God to now also be merciful to them. ³²Indeed, God allowed everyone to disobey him in order to be merciful to them.

³³God is so very wealthy, wise, and knowledgeable! No one can fully understand what he does! ³⁴Indeed, {as Isaiah wrote,} "{No one} could {ever} comprehend what the Lord thinks or advise him!" ³⁵Furthermore, "No one could {ever} give God {anything} that would cause God to owe him {something}!"

³⁶{No one can do these things}, because everything {came} from God, {exists} by God, and {exists} for God. {I pray that} everyone will glorify him forever. May this truly be so!

Chapter 12

¹So then, {considering everything that I have told you,} I exhort you fellow believers, based on how compassionate God is: Devote yourselves {to God}, as if you were living animals someone offers to God. Be holy and please God. Doing so is the reasonable way for you to serve {God}. ²Do not change yourselves to be like the {sinful people who live at} the current time. Rather, let God change the way you behave by changing the way you think in order that you can test and prove what God wants {you to do}. {God wants you to do} what is good, pleasing, and flawless.

³Indeed, based on {how} God has kindly authorized me {to represent him,} I am telling every one of you to not think you are better than you really are. Rather, think properly {about yourselves}, according to the amount of trusting {in God} that God has apportioned to each one {of you}. ⁴{You must think properly about yourselves} because, in the same way that a {human} body has many parts that all function for different purposes, ⁵so also, we many {believers in the Messiah} are united to the Messiah as one group. {Each one of us is united to each other like} the individual parts {of a human body} are united. ⁶Yet we {believers in the Messiah} have received different spiritual abilities in accordance with what God has kindly given to us. If {God has enabled you} to prophesy, {then prophesy} in accordance with the amount of trusting {in God} that God has apportioned to you. ⁷If {God has enabled you} to serve, {then you should} serve {others}. {If God has enabled you} to teach {others}, {then you should} teach {others}. ⁸If {God has enabled you} to encourage {others}, {then} you should encourage {others}. If God has enabled you} to give {what you have to others}, {then} you should generously give {what you have to others}. {If God has enabled you} to lead {others}, {then} you should lead {others} diligently. {If God has enabled you} to be merciful, {then} you should cheerfully be merciful.

⁹Love {each other} genuinely. Detest what is wicked. Fervently retain what is good. ¹⁰Be affectionate toward each other in regard to loving fellow believers. Be the first to honor other {fellow believers}. ¹¹Do not be lazy, {but} be

diligent. Be sincerely enthusiastic. Serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice because you are confident {in the Lord}. Be patient when you suffer. Pray persistently. ¹³Share {what you have} {to provide} what God's people need. Find opportunities to welcome {others into your home}. ¹⁴{Ask God to} bless the people who mistreat you. {Ask God to} bless them rather than curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice along with those people who are rejoicing. Cry along with those who are crying. ¹⁶Be as concerned for each other as you are for yourselves. Do not think arrogantly {about yourselves}. Rather, associate with humble people. Do not be arrogant. ¹⁷Do not do something evil to someone who has done something evil to you. Think carefully about {doing} things that everyone considers to be good. ¹⁸Live peacefully with everyone whenever it is possible for you to do so. ¹⁹{Fellow believers} whom I love, do not retaliate {when people do something evil against you}. Rather, let God punish {them}. {I say this} because Moses wrote {in the Scriptures}, "The Lord says, 'I will retaliate {when people do something evil against you}. I will punish {them according to what they have done}.'" ²⁰Rather {than permitting us to retaliate, God instructed us in the Scriptures}, "Feed your enemy if that person is hungry. Give your enemy something to drink if that person is thirsty. {Do this} because when you do so, {your enemy will feel ashamed, as if} you were piling up burning coals on top of that person's head." ²¹{In other words,} do not let what is evil defeat you {by causing you to do what is evil}. Rather, defeat what is evil by {doing} what is good.

Chapter 13

¹Every one of you must submit yourselves to those whom God has authorized to govern you. {This is} because no one {can govern} unless God authorizes them {to do so}. God has instituted the existing governments. ²So people who resist those whom God has authorized {to govern} are opposing what God has commanded. God will punish those people who oppose {those whom he has authorized to govern}. ³Indeed, the people who rule are {not supposed} to terrify {those people who do} what is good. Rather, {they are supposed to terrify} {those people who do} what is evil. If you do not want to fear those whom God authorizes to rule, {then} do what is good and those who rule will commend you for doing so. ⁴{This is} because the people {whom God authorizes to rule} serve God for your benefit. But if you do what is evil, you should be afraid, because God has authorized those people who rule to punish {people} for a good reason. Indeed, those people who rule serve God by avenging {what is evil} in order to punish anyone who practices what is evil. ⁵Consequently, you must submit yourselves {to those people whom God authorizes to rule}. {You must do this} not only because they can punish you, but also because you know {that to disobey them is to disobey God}! ⁶Indeed, you also pay taxes because of these things. {You also pay taxes} because those people {whom God authorizes to rule} serve God. They devote themselves to serving {by governing}. ⁷Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay taxes to whom you owe taxes. Pay fees to whom you owe fees. Fear those people whom you should fear. Honor those people whom you should honor.

⁸Do not owe anything to anyone. Rather, continue to love other {people who believe in the Messiah} {as if you owe it to them}. {Do this} because someone who loves another person accomplishes {what God required in} the laws {he gave the Jews}. ⁹{This is true} because {God commanded} these things {in his laws when he said}, "Do not have sexual relations with someone whom you did not marry. Do not murder. Do not rob people. Do not lust for what belongs to other people." You could summarize anything else that God commands {in the laws he gave the Jews} with this {other} thing {God commanded}: "Love other people in the same way you love yourself." ¹⁰{When you} love other people, {you} do not do evil things {to them}. This is why loving {other people} accomplishes {what God required in} the laws {he gave the Jews}.

¹¹{Do} these things because you know what time it is. It is already the time for you to be spiritually alert because {the time when Jesus will return} to {finally} save us is now closer than when we began trusting {in him}. ¹²{In the same way that} the night ends just before the day begins, the time of this sinful world is almost over, and Jesus will return soon. So, we must stop doing {what is evil, which is like} what people do when it is dark. Instead, we must {oppose what is evil by doing what is good, which is like} a soldier puts on his armor {to fight the enemy} during the day. ¹³We must behave appropriately, as if it were daytime {and people could see what we do}. We must not celebrate drunkenly or get drunk {at all}. We must not do any unrestrained sexually immoral acts {at all}. We must

not quarrel {with others} or be jealous {of others}. ¹⁴Rather {than doing those things}, act like the Lord Jesus the Messiah would act. Do not concern yourselves with {anything that is related to} what your {sinful} self wants to do.

Chapter 14

¹Welcome any fellow {believer in the Messiah} who is immature in how they believe. {Do} not {welcome them} in order to argue with them about matters of opinion. ²{There are some people} who are convinced that they can eat any {kind of food}. But the immature {believer in the Messiah} {thinks that they can only} eat vegetables. ³{The believer in the Messiah} who eats {every kind of food} must not scorn {his fellow believer} who does not eat {every kind of food}. The believer in the Messiah who does not eat {every kind of food} also must not judge {his fellow believer} who eats {every kind of food}. {This is} because God has welcomed {both of} them. ⁴You should not judge {your fellow believer, who is like} a slave belonging to another {master}. He either pleases or does not please his master, {according to how the master judges}. Yet God will make him pleasing {to himself} because the Lord can do so.

⁵Some people consider certain days to be special, while other people consider all days {to be the same}. Each person must be completely certain {that what they do honors God}. ⁶The person who thinks certain days are special does so in order to {honor} the Lord. The person who eats {every kind of food} does so in order to {honor} the Lord. {This is} because that person is thankful to God. The person who refuses to eat {certain foods} does so in order to {honor} the Lord. That person is thankful to God as well. ⁷{This is true} because not one of us {believers in the Messiah} lives {only} to {please} himself, and not one of us dies {only} to {please} himself. ⁸Indeed, while we {believers in the Messiah} live, we live to {please} the Lord. When we die, we die to {please} the Lord. So then, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹Indeed, this is why the Messiah {Jesus} died and {became} alive {again}: in order to become Lord over those who are dead and those who are alive.

¹⁰As for you, those of you who judge your fellow believers must not do so! You also must not scorn your fellow believers! {Do not do these things} because {one day} God will judge all of us {who believe in the Messiah}.

¹¹Indeed, Isaiah wrote in the Scriptures, "The Lord says {this oath}, 'As certainly as I am alive, {it is just as certain that} everyone will worship me. And everyone will acknowledge to me {that I am God}.'"

¹²Therefore, each one of us {who believes in the Messiah} will certainly answer to God for whatever we do {while we are alive}.

¹³So we must stop judging other believers. Instead, we must resolve not to do anything that could tempt our fellow believers to sin. ¹⁴I am absolutely convinced by the Lord Jesus that no {food} is inherently sinful {for believers in the Messiah to eat}. If someone regards some {food} as sinful to eat, then it is {only} sinful for that person to eat it.

¹⁵{Do not tempt fellow believers to sin} because, if you grieve your fellow believer by eating what that person considers to be sinful to eat, you are not acting in a loving manner anymore. Do not cause a fellow believer to {stop trusting in God and} become ruined {eternally} because of what you {want to} eat! The Messiah died to save that person! ¹⁶So then, do not do anything that will cause anyone to slander the good things that God has given you.

¹⁷{Do not do this}, because eating and drinking do not characterize God's kingdom. Rather, being righteous, peaceful, and joyful through the Holy Spirit {characterizes God's kingdom}. ¹⁸Indeed, {any} believer who serves the Messiah by doing these things greatly pleases God, and {other} people will {also} approve of that person.

¹⁹Therefore, we must eagerly try to live peacefully {with other believers} and help each other become {spiritually} mature. ²⁰Do not ruin what God has done because {you want to eat certain} foods! God permits us to eat all {kinds of food}. However, it is sinful for someone to eat {certain foods} if doing so tempts {your fellow believer} to sin. ²¹It is better not to eat {any} meat, or drink {any} wine, or {do} anything that could tempt your fellow believer to sin, [or that could offend that person or cause that person to remain spiritually immature]. ²²Keep what you believe {that God permits you to do} between you and God. The person who does not feel guilty concerning what he believes to be right is blessed. ²³By contrast, God judges someone who considers {eating certain foods to be sinful} and eats

{those foods}. {This is} because that person did not act according to what that person believes {is right}. A person who does anything that is not according to what that person believes {is right} is sinning.

Chapter 15

¹Indeed, we {spiritually} mature {believers in the Messiah} must support {our} fellow believers in the Messiah who are {spiritually} immature. We must not {only} do what pleases us. ²Each one of us believers in the Messiah must do what pleases his fellow believers in order to do what is good {for them, and} in order to help them become {spiritually} mature. ³For instance, not even the Messiah {Jesus} pleased himself! Rather, {he lived to please others}. This is what {David meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures about the Messiah saying to God}, "When people insult you, they {also} insult me!" ⁴Indeed, the prophets previously wrote everything {in the Scriptures} in order to teach us. {They also wrote the Scriptures} in order to make us confident through what the Scriptures say that helps us endure and encourages us.

⁵I pray that {our} patient and encouraging God will allow you to live harmoniously with each other the way the Messiah Jesus did. ⁶{I pray that you will live harmoniously with each other} in order that you might be united when you glorify God. {He is} the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

⁷Consequently, welcome your fellow believers {in the Messiah} in the same way that the Messiah {Jesus} also welcomed you in order to glorify God! ⁸Indeed, I{, Paul,} am telling {you} that the Messiah {Jesus} serves the circumcised {Jews} because of how trustworthy God is. {He did this} in order to secure what God had promised to the {Jewish} forefathers {Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob}. ⁹{Jesus also did this} in order for the nations to glorify God because he is so merciful. This is what {David meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "So I will proclaim {who} you {are} {when I am} among the nations, and I will praise you by singing songs." ¹⁰Again, {Moses} said in the Scriptures, "{All you} nations, celebrate along with God's people!" ¹¹And also {in the Scriptures someone said}, "All {you} nations, praise the Lord! All {you} people groups, commend him!" ¹²{The Prophet} Isaiah also said {in the Scriptures}, "The one who descends from {David's father} Jesse will come. He will begin to rule over the nations. The nations will become confident because of him."

¹³I pray that the God who makes {people} confident will cause you to feel exceedingly joyful and peaceful by trusting {in him}! {I pray that God will do this} in order for you to be exceedingly confident by the Holy Spirit enabling you.

¹⁴My fellow believers, God has also persuaded me personally that each of you are exceedingly good, exceedingly knowledgeable of many things, and even able to teach other people. ¹⁵{In this letter} I have written to you {believers in the Messiah} in a bold manner about some things in order to remind you {of them}. {I have done this} because God has kindly authorized me {to do so}. ¹⁶{God did this} in order for me to serve the Messiah Jesus among non-Jewish people {by preaching} the good news from God as if I were a priest. {I do this} in order for the non-Jewish people {who trust in Jesus} to be {like} something offered {to God that} pleases {him, and that} the Holy Spirit has set apart {for him}.

¹⁷So, as someone who is united with the Messiah Jesus, I have {good reasons} to boast about what God is doing {through me}! ¹⁸Indeed, I will only be so bold as to speak about what the Messiah has done through me {that has led} to the nations obediently {trusting in God's good news}! {The Messiah did this} through what I said and did. ¹⁹{The Messiah also did this} through powerful and wonderful miracles as God's {Holy} Spirit powerfully {enabled me}! As a result, I have completed proclaiming the good news about the Messiah all the way around from Jerusalem to the {province of} Illyricum. ²⁰And so, I aspire to preach the good news where people have never heard about the Messiah {Jesus}. {I desire this} in order to not {interfere with someone else's work, as if I were} building something where another person had already laid the foundation. ²¹Rather, {I preach the good news to those who have never heard it.} This is what {Isaiah meant when} he wrote {in the Scriptures}, "Those people whom no one told about him will perceive {who he is}. Those people who have not heard {about him} will comprehend {who he is}."

²²That also hindered me over and over again from visiting all of you {at Rome}. ²³Yet at the present time I have nowhere left to go in these areas {to proclaim the good news}. I also have deeply desired to visit you for many years. ²⁴{So} whenever I go to {the province of} Spain, I truly expect to visit you while passing through {Rome}. {I} also {expect} you to help me continue my journey to Spain after I first enjoy being with you for some time. ²⁵Yet, at the present time I am going to Jerusalem in order to serve God's people {there}. ²⁶{I am doing this} because {the believers in} the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia were glad to give money to help the poor people of God {who live} in Jerusalem. ²⁷In fact, those believers were glad, and they should {help} the poor believers in Jerusalem. {This is} because the non-Jewish believers have spiritually benefited from the Jewish believers. {So,} the non-Jewish believers should also serve the Jewish believers by providing what they physically need. ²⁸So then, after I finish this task and safely deliver this money to the poor believers in Jerusalem, I will pass through {your city} on my way to Spain. ²⁹I am certain that the Messiah will fully bless {us} when I visit you!

³⁰Fellow believers, I appeal to you based on our Lord Jesus the Messiah and how the {Holy} Spirit has enabled us to love {each other}: Fervently pray to God with me {and} for me! ³¹{Pray} that God will rescue me from the Jews in the province of Judea who do not believe {in Jesus}. {Pray} also that God's people in Jerusalem will accept the money that I give them for {the poor believers there}. ³²{Pray also} that I can joyfully visit you as God wants, {and} we may refresh each other. ³³Finally, {I pray that} the God who makes {us} peaceful will be with all of you. May it be so!

Chapter 16

¹I, {Paul,} recommend to you our fellow believer whose name is Phoebe. She also serves the group of believers {that meets} in the city of Cenchrea. ²{I recommend Phoebe to you} in order for you to accept her {as a fellow believer} in the Lord {Jesus}. {Accept her} in a way that is appropriate for God's people. {I} also {recommend her to you in order for you} to help her in whatever way and with anything she might need from you. {Do this} because she has helped many people, including me personally.

³Say hello to Priscilla and {her husband} Aquila. They have worked with me {to tell people} about the Messiah Jesus. ⁴They risked {the Romans} executing them in order to save my life. Both I and all the groups of believers among the nations are thankful for them. ⁵Also, {say hello to} the group of believers {that meets} in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Say hello to Epaenetus, whom I love. He is the first person from the province of Asia {Minor} to believe in the Messiah {Jesus}. ⁶Say hello to Mary. She has labored a lot for your sake. ⁷Say hello to Andronicus and Junia. They are my fellow Jews, and we were in prison together. Those whom Jesus sent to represent him know them very well. God united them to the Messiah before {he did so to} me. ⁸Say hello to Ampliatus. I love him {as a fellow believer} in the Lord {Jesus}. ⁹Say hello to Urbanus. He works with us {to tell people} about the Messiah {Jesus}. Also say hello to Stachys, whom I love. ¹⁰Say hello to Apelles. The Messiah {Jesus} has approved him. Say hello to those {believers} who live in the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹Say hello to my fellow Jew Herodion. Say hello to those whom God united to the Lord {Jesus} who live in the household of Narcissus. ¹²Say hello to Tryphaena and Tryphosa. These ladies labor {to tell people} about the Lord {Jesus}. Say hello to Persis, whom I love. She has labored a lot {to tell people} about the Lord {Jesus}. ¹³Say hello to Rufus. The Lord {Jesus} chose him. Also {say hello to} his mother. She has been like a mother to me as well. ¹⁴Say hello to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and our fellow believers who {meet} together with them. ¹⁵Say hello to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas. Also {say hello to} all God's people who {meet} together with them. ¹⁶Say hello to each other in a loving way. All of the groups of believers who belong to the Messiah {in this area} say hello to you!

¹⁷My fellow believers, I exhort you to look out for the people who are causing {believers} to argue {with each other} and tempting {them} to sin, which contradicts what we have taught you. Stay away from them! ¹⁸Indeed, people like this are not serving our Lord {Jesus} the Messiah! Rather, {they only serve} their own appetites. By speaking so eloquently and flatteringly, they trick the minds of people who do not suspect {them of teaching what is false}. ¹⁹{I tell you these things} because {believers} in many places have heard about how you obey {God}. As a result, I am overjoyed because of you! But I {also} desire that you act wisely with regard to what is good and remain innocent

with regard to what is bad. ²⁰The God who makes {us} peaceful will quickly {make you victorious over Satan, as if} you were trampling{him} under your feet! {I pray that} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {will} be gracious to you!

²¹Timothy, who works with me {to tell people about Jesus}, says hello to you. My fellow Jews, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, also {say hello to you}. ²²I {am} Tertius, {and I am} writing this letter {as Paul dictates it to me}. I say hello to you {as a fellow believer} in the Lord {Jesus}. ²³Gaius says hello to you. He hosts me and the whole group of believers {who meet here}. Erastus controls the money for this city. {He} and Quartus, {our} fellow believer, say hello to you. ²⁴^[1] [{I pray that} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {will} be gracious to all of you! May it be so!]

²⁵{I pray that everyone will glorify God.} He is the one who can strengthen you {spiritually} based on the good news that I proclaim about Jesus the Messiah. {What I proclaim is} based on the mysterious {plan} that God revealed but {previously} concealed {from people} for a very long time. ²⁶However, now God has revealed {that mysterious plan}. He has made it known through his prophets who wrote about it {in the Scriptures}. {They did this} according to what the God who lives forever commanded in order that all the nations would obey {God} by trusting {in Jesus the Messiah}. ²⁷God alone is wise. {I pray that everyone will} glorify him through Jesus the Messiah forever! May it be so!

16:24 ^[1]

1 Corinthians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Sosthenes our fellow believer {is with me}. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. ²{I send this letter} to {you who are part of} the groups of believers belonging to God, which are in the city of Corinth. {God has} set {you} apart for himself by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus, and {he has} chosen {you} to be his own people. {You are} part of the group of believers who worship our Lord Jesus the Messiah in many countries and cities. {Jesus the Messiah is} their {Lord} and our {Lord}. ³{May} God, {who is} our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

⁴I often thank my God about you. {I do this} because {I know how} God is acting kindly towards you by uniting you to the Messiah Jesus. ⁵{When I say that God has acted kindly towards you, I mean} that he has abundantly blessed you by uniting you to the Messiah in every area {of your lives}, including whatever you say and whatever you know. ⁶{God has blessed you} because he has proved to you that what we told you about the Messiah was true. ⁷{God has done these things for you} so that you are completely equipped spiritually {during this time when you} confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return. ⁸{Just as he proved our message to be true,} God will also prove your trust {in the Messiah} true until {your earthly lives} end. {Because of this,} he will judge you not guilty when our Lord Jesus the Messiah returns {to earth}. ⁹God always does what he promises, {and he is the one} who has specially chosen you to share everything with his Son, Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

¹⁰My fellow believers, as one whom our Lord Jesus the Messiah has authorized, I appeal to you, {asking} that all of you agree with one another. {I ask that} you do not split up into rival groups but that you reconcile with each other by agreeing in what you think and by agreeing in what you decide to do. ¹¹{I appeal to you} because some {members} of Chloe's {household} have talked to me about you, my fellow believers. {They said} that you quarrel among yourselves. ¹²What I am talking about is how many of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos' group, or that you belong to Cephas' group, or that you belong to the Messiah's group. ¹³No one has split the Messiah into pieces{, so you also should not split into pieces}. No one crucified Paul in your behalf, and no one baptized you so that you belong to Paul. ¹⁴I give thanks {to God} that I baptized no people who belong to your group except for {two individuals:} Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵Because {I baptized so few of you,} no person is able to claim that I baptized you, so that you belong to my group. ¹⁶Oh yes, I remember that I also baptized those who live in the house of Stephanas. Other than that, I do not think that I baptized any other people {in your group}. ¹⁷The reason {I baptized so few of you} is that the Messiah did not commission me to baptize {people}. Rather, {he commissioned me} to proclaim the good news. {I do this} without using words that are wise {by human standards}. That way, I do not destroy {the power of the message about} the Messiah dying on the cross.

¹⁸{I do not use wise words,} because the message that I proclaim about {the death of the Messiah on} the cross sounds foolish to people who are bringing destruction on themselves. However, God works powerfully in this message for us whom he is rescuing. ¹⁹{You can tell that this is true,} because the prophet Isaiah wrote,

"I will render useless the wise things that wise people think,

and I will make the intelligent things that intelligent people think worthless."

²⁰{So then,} wise people are not really wise, and experts are not really experts, and people who are good at arguing are not really good at it, as they all belong to the current world system. {In fact,} God has shown that what seems to be wise in this current world is not wise at all. ²¹Here is how {God has done this}. Just as God wisely chose, unbelievers did not get to know God by means of their wise thinking. So, God decided to rescue those who

have faith {in the Messiah} by means of the foolish message that believers proclaim. ²²On the one hand, {many} Jewish people want to see powerful deeds. On the other hand, {many} Greek people search for wise thinking. ²³We, however, proclaim that the Messiah died on a cross. {Many} Jewish people {find this message} offensive, and {many} non-Jewish people {think that this message is} foolish. ²⁴We, however, whom God has chosen, whether {we are} Jewish {people} or Greek {people}, have learned that God works powerfully and wisely through {this message about} the Messiah. ²⁵{This is} because what God does that seems foolish is wiser than {anything that} humans {do}, and what God does that seems weak is stronger than {anything that} humans {do}.

²⁶For {proof that this is so,} think about the fact that God chose you {the way you are}, fellow believers. From a human perspective, most of you did not think wisely, do powerful deeds, {or} belong to important families.

²⁷Rather, God decided to use what seems foolish to humans to humble those who think wisely. God decided to use what seems weak to humans to humble those people and things that act powerfully. ²⁸God decided to use what seems unimportant to people and what people look down on. {It is as if} these things do not {even} exist, {but God decided to use them} to make the things that everyone knows about insignificant. ²⁹{God did these things with the goal} that no humans would say great things about themselves in God's sight. ³⁰It is God who has united you to the Messiah Jesus. By working through the Messiah, God has made us wise. He has declared us innocent, chosen us to be his own people, and delivered us {from evil powers}. ³¹So, {because God is the one who does all these things, we should do what} the prophet Jeremiah wrote:

"If people want to say great things about something, they should say those great things about the Lord."

Chapter 2

¹My fellow believers, I also {acted according to this pattern} when I visited you and told you about what God has now revealed to us. I did not speak in more powerful ways than others do. I did not argue in wiser ways than others do. ²{I did this} because I chose {to speak and act as if} the only things I understood while I was with you were Jesus the Messiah and how he died on the cross. ³I also {lived according to this pattern} when I was staying with you. I was sick, I was afraid, and I frequently shivered and shook. ⁴I did not speak wisely and persuasively {according to human standards} when I talked {to you} and shared my message {with you}. Instead, I proved that God's Spirit works powerfully {through me when I shared my message}. ⁵{I shared my message in this way} in order that you might trust {in God} because he acts powerfully, not because humans spoke wise words {to you}.

⁶Despite {what I have said,} we {who proclaim the good news} do speak wisely when we are with spiritually mature people. However, people who think only in human ways and people who rule right now do not think that we speak wisely. {Soon,} these people will no longer rule. ⁷No, we speak wisely {because we proclaim} the things that God has revealed to us. God concealed these things {until now}, although he had already decided to do them before he created anything. {He has done all of this} so that he might honor us. ⁸The people who rule right now did not know about these wise things. {You can tell that} they did not know, because they killed our glorious Lord on the cross.

⁹Rather, {how they acted} fits with what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

"God has ready for the people who love him

things that no one witnessed before

and things that no one heard about before

and things that no human even imagined before."

¹⁰God has made these things known to us by the {power of God's} Spirit. {God works by the power of his Spirit} because God's Spirit explores all people and things. He even explores things about God that are very difficult to understand. ¹¹{You can tell that God's Spirit explores everything about God,} because everyone knows that only each human being understands everything about himself or herself. In the same way, only God's Spirit understands everything about God. ¹²We did indeed receive the Spirit who comes from God. We did not receive a

spirit that belongs to the current world. {We received God's Spirit} in order that we might understand everything that God has done for us. ¹³These are the very things that we also talk about. We do not use words that humans wisely teach. Instead, we use words that the Spirit teaches, so that we explain spiritual truths with spiritual words.

¹⁴Now, people who do not have God's Spirit reject the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches. {They reject these things,} because they think that they are foolish. They cannot know about {the things that God's Spirit gives and teaches,} because only people who have God's Spirit can judge rightly about them. ¹⁵On the other hand, people who have God's Spirit {can} judge rightly about everything. However, no {other} person {can} judge rightly about them. ¹⁶This fits with {what the scripture says}:

"No human knows what the Lord is thinking.

No human can teach him about anything."

We, however, can think the same things that the Messiah is thinking.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, {when I visited you,} I was unable to teach you in the way I would teach people who have God's Spirit. Rather, {I had to teach you} in the way I would teach people who think only in human ways. {I had to do this} because you believed in the Messiah in an immature way. ²I taught you about things that are simple. I did not teach about things that are complex. {I did this} because you were not ready for complex teachings. In fact, you are still not ready for complex teachings. ³{I know that you are not ready for complex teachings,} because you are still people who think only in human ways. Some of you are jealous of each other, and some of you are fighting with each other. When you do these things, it proves that you are people who think only in human ways and who act only in human ways. ⁴Further, some of you are claiming that you belong to Paul's group, for example, or that you belong to Apollos's group. When you make claims like these, it proves that you are thinking and acting only in human ways.

⁵You need to realize that Apollos and I, Paul, are just people who serve {the Messiah}. Each of us does what the Lord has assigned us to do. When we told you about the Messiah, you trusted in him{, not in us}. ⁶{God assigned} me to proclaim the good news to you first. I was like someone who plants seeds. {God assigned} Apollos to proclaim even more about the good news to you. He was like someone who waters the seeds {so that they grow}. However, God himself enabled you to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is the one who makes the plants grow. ⁷You can see that the person who first proclaims the good news to people is not important. The person who proclaims even more about the good news to people is not important. These people are like those who plant the seeds and those who water the plants, since they too are not important. Instead, it is God who is important, because he enables people to believe in and understand the good news. In the same way, he is important because he causes the plants to grow. ⁸In fact, the person who first proclaims the good news to people and the person who proclaims more about the good news to people have the same goal. They are like the person who plants the seeds and the person who waters the plants, who also have the same goal. God will reward people who do either task. {He will reward them} in a way that is appropriate for what they did. ⁹We {who proclaim the good news} all work for God, but you belong to God. It is as if you were farmland that God owns{, in which we planted and watered seeds}. Indeed, it is as if you were a house that God owns.

¹⁰God gave me the skills to wisely proclaim the good news to you first. I am like the construction boss who puts a foundation in the ground before building a house. Others{, such as Apollos,} proclaim more about the good news to you. They are like other builders who construct a house on top of that foundation. In the end, all the people who proclaim more about the good news should make sure that they proclaim it correctly. They should be like builders who construct a house the right way on top of a foundation. ¹¹No one can put a foundation in the ground if another person has already put it in the ground. So also, no one else can first proclaim the good news to you, because I already did that. What I proclaimed to you is {what} Jesus the Messiah {accomplished}. This message about Jesus is like the foundation of a house. ¹²Builders can use many different building materials when they construct a house on its foundation. They can use {more durable materials like} gold, silver, and jewels, {and less

durable materials like} lumber, grass, and straw. In the same way, some of those who proclaim more about the good news teach things that are more pleasing to God. Others teach things that are less pleasing to God. ¹³On the day when the Messiah returns to judge everyone, he will reveal what kind of work each person has done. The quality of the materials that builders use to construct a building becomes clear when the building catches on fire. In a similar way, a judgment like fire will occur on the day when the Messiah returns. This judgment will show the quality of what those who proclaim more about the gospel have taught. ¹⁴Any builders who constructed a building that survives a fire gain honor and money. In the same way, God will honor and reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God accepts when he judges everyone. ¹⁵Any builders who constructed a building that fire consumes lose respect and money. However, the builders do not die in the fire, but they escape from the flames. In the same way, when he judges everyone, God will not honor or reward all those who teach more about the good news in a way that God does not accept. However, God will still accept these teachers despite the wrong things that they have taught.

¹⁶You need to remember that you are like God's temple in Jerusalem {because God is present among you like he was present in the temple}. You need to remember that you are like a house in which God's Spirit lives {because he is always present with you}. ¹⁷God will act against any person who acts against his temple. This is because God's temple belongs to him alone. {Since} you are like God's temple{, God will act against any person who acts against you}.

¹⁸Do not believe what is not true about yourselves. You who consider yourselves to be wise according to human standards should become foolish {according to human standards}. In this way, you will {really} become wise people. ¹⁹{I speak these words} because the things that humans consider to be wise are things that God considers to be foolish. {You know that this is true} because the author of the book of Job wrote,

"God is the one who disrupts the clever schemes that wise people plan."

²⁰Further, {the author of a psalm wrote},

"The Lord is aware of everything that wise people plan, {and he knows} that these plans will not succeed."

²¹Therefore, none of you should boast about {how you follow other} humans. {I say this} because you have everything{, so boasting about following other humans is foolish}. ²²You have {leaders such as} Paul, Apollos, and Peter. You have everything that God made, {you do not fear when} you live, and {you can find comfort when you} die. You have everything that exists now and everything that will exist in the future. Indeed, you have everything.

²³Further, the Messiah has you, and God has the Messiah.

Chapter 4

¹I want people to think of us {who proclaim the good news} as those who serve the Messiah and who are in charge of proclaiming what God has now revealed to us. ²Whenever a leader puts another person in charge, the leader requires that person to do his or her tasks faithfully. {In the same way, God requires that we who proclaim the good news do our task faithfully.} ³I do not worry about what you or any other human authority decides {about whether I have acted faithfully or not}. In fact, I do not even worry about what I myself decide {about whether I have acted faithfully or not}. ⁴In fact, I do not know about anything I have done wrong. However, what I know about myself does not prove that I have acted faithfully. Rather, it is the Lord who will decide {whether I have acted faithfully or not}. ⁵So then, you should not finally decide about anything until the Lord comes back {to judge everyone and everything}. He will make clear what is now hidden, and he will show everyone what each person desires and plans. At that time, God will praise each person {who has acted faithfully}.

⁶My fellow believers, I have talked in this way about myself and Apollos for your benefit. I want you to learn from our example that you should act only in ways that fit with what the authors of the Scriptures wrote. Then, nobody will speak great things about one leader and bad things about another leader. ⁷Nobody has set you apart {from

every other believer}. In fact, God has given to you every good thing that you have. Since these things are gifts from God, you should not say proudly that you yourself earned them.

⁸{You are acting as if} you currently have everything that you need spiritually. {You are acting as if} you currently have more spiritual blessings than you need. {You are acting as if} you have currently begun to rule with Christ, even though we {who proclaim the good news} are not ruling with Christ now. Indeed, I wish that you really were ruling with him, in order that we {who proclaim the good news} could be ruling with you. ⁹Rather {than thinking that we rule with Christ now}, I consider us apostles to be those whom God has appointed to suffer humiliation and to die. We suffer humiliation and die publicly, and everything that God has created, including spiritual beings and humans, can see us. ¹⁰We {seem to} be foolish people because we serve the Messiah, but {you think that} you are wise people because God unites you to the Messiah. We {seem to} be people who do not have power or influence, but {you think that} you do have these things. {You think that} people praise you, but those people shame us. ¹¹Even now {as I write this letter to you}, we {whom Christ has sent} have often not had enough food or drink. We wear ragged clothing, and others repeatedly strike us. We constantly travel and do not return to a home. ¹²We do manual labor {to earn a living}. When people speak badly to us, we say good things about them. When people hurt us {because we serve the Messiah}, we patiently live through it. ¹³When people say bad things about us, we say encouraging words to them. From a human perspective, we are worthless, like filthy garbage that someone should throw away. {All these things are true about us} even now {as I write this letter to you}.

¹⁴I do not include in my letter what I have just finished saying because I want to make you ashamed. Rather, {I include these things} because I want to admonish you, since you are like my own children, whom I love. ¹⁵When I first preached the good news to you, and God united you to Jesus the Messiah, I became your spiritual father. So, even if you had a million teachers who helped you to live in union with the Messiah, I would still be the only spiritual father you have. ¹⁶Because {I am your spiritual father}, I plead with you to imitate how I live. ¹⁷Because {I want you to imitate me}, I had Timothy visit you. He is like my own child, and I love him. He faithfully {serves the Messiah} as one whom God has united to the Lord. He will teach you again about how I behave as one whom God has united to the Messiah Jesus. I instruct every church in every place {that I visit} to behave in these ways.

¹⁸Some of you are saying great things about yourselves. These people act as if I were not about to visit you.

¹⁹However, I will visit you very soon, as long as the Lord wants {me to do so}. I already know what these people who say great things about themselves claim. {When I visit you}, I will learn whether they are actually powerful or not. ²⁰{I will do this} because God's kingdom functions by God working powerfully through people, not by people saying great things. ²¹When you choose how you will respond to what I am saying, you are also choosing how I will act {when I visit}. When I visit you, I can either harshly discipline you {because you did not listen}, or I can act gently and lovingly {because you did listen}.

Chapter 5

¹I have learned that you are in fact allowing people from your group to have improper sex. Even those who do not worship God do not allow some of the things that you allow. {The worst thing that I have learned is} that a man from your group is having sex with his stepmother. ²{Despite this,} you still say great things about yourselves instead of lamenting {that sin}. {You should have lamented} with the goal of expelling the man who committed this sexual sin. ³{You should expel him} because I have already declared the man who did this evil thing to be guilty. Although I am not with you physically, I think about you and care about you. {Therefore, when I declare this man to be guilty, it is as valid} as if I were with you. ⁴When you gather together, and I am thinking of you, we represent our Lord Jesus the Messiah. {When you gather in this way, you should punish this man} as our Lord Jesus authorizes you to do. ⁵You should expel this man so that Satan rules over him. That will destroy his sinful parts, and then God will save him when the Lord returns.

⁶Saying great things about yourselves is not the right thing to do. Surely you realize that one person doing evil things is like fermented dough. Even a little fermented dough makes a whole lump of dough fermented, and even one person doing evil things makes the whole church guilty. ⁷Just as Jews remove the yeast from their houses

{during the Passover festival}, so you should remove anyone who does evil things from your group. Then, you will be free of sin, just like fresh, unleavened dough is free of yeast. In fact, you live in a time that is like the festival of Passover. {This is because} the Messiah has died for you, just like the lamb that Jews sacrifice during the Passover festival represents how God delivered them. ⁸Since {the Messiah has died for us}, let us act as if we were participating in the festival of Passover and remove the old leaven. We should get rid of the leaven, which stands for doing what is evil and wicked. Instead, we should eat unfermented bread, which stands for doing what is honest and trustworthy.

⁹In the letter {that I sent to you before this one}, I told you not to keep company with people who act in sexually improper ways. ¹⁰{I did} not {mean that you should} entirely {disassociate} with unbelieving people who act in sexually immoral ways, or with people who want more than they need or who cheat others, or with people who worship false gods. To avoid these kinds of people, you would need to get away from the entire world. {That is not what I have commanded you to do.} ¹¹Now, in this letter, I am telling you not to keep company with any person whom you call a fellow believer who is acting sinfully. This includes having improper sex, wanting more than one needs, worshipping other gods, abusing others with words, getting drunk, and cheating others. Do not have meals with a person who does any of these things. ¹²{I want you to act in this way only with fellow believers,} because {you and} I do not need to decide whether someone who is not part of our group is guilty or innocent. Rather, you need to focus on deciding whether people who are part of your group are guilty or innocent. ¹³{Do not worry about people who are not part of your group because} God is the one who decides whether they are guilty or innocent. {You should focus on people who are part of your group because the scripture says,}

"You must get rid of any evil person who is part of your group!"

Chapter 6

¹When someone from your group quarrels with another person from your group, you should never settle the quarrel {in a public court} in front of people who do not believe. Rather, {you should settle the quarrel in private} among the people whom God has set apart for himself. ²Surely you know that the people whom God has set apart for himself will decide whether all things and people that God has created are guilty or innocent. Since you will decide whether all these things and people are guilty or innocent, you can surely decide about small quarrels {within your group}. ³You need to realize that we will decide whether angels are innocent or guilty. {Since we will do that,} we are certainly able to decide about disputes related to our current lives. ⁴Therefore, whenever you quarrel with one another concerning your current lives, you should not choose people who are not part of your group of believers to decide who is guilty or innocent. ⁵I include what I have just said in order to make you feel ashamed. Surely there are people in your group who are wise enough to be able to decide about disputes among fellow believers. ⁶But instead, some believers among you accuse other believers in a legal court, and people who do not believe settle the dispute.

⁷Because you have disputes with each other, you have already completely failed to follow Jesus. Rather {than failing in this way}, you should instead forgive fellow believers when they harm or defraud you. ⁸Rather {than forgiving others}, however, you have harmed and defrauded {other people}. In fact, {you have done} these things to fellow believers!

⁹{I am shocked that you do these things} even though you realize that people who harm others will not participate in God's kingdom. Do not believe anyone who tells you something else. Anyone who has improper sex or who worships other gods or who has sex with a married person or who participates in sexual acts with a person of the same gender or who initiates sexual acts with a person of the same gender ¹⁰or who steals from others or who wants more than he or she needs or who gets drunk or who abuses others with words or who cheats others will not participate in God's kingdom. ¹¹Some of you used to behave in these ways. However, now God has cleansed you, he has made you holy, and he has declared you to be innocent. {You experience these things} because the Lord Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Spirit work powerfully {to give them to you}.

¹²{Some of you say,} “I can do anything and not become guilty.” However, {I say that} some things are not helpful {to anybody}. {Again, some of you say,} “I can do anything and not become guilty.” However, {I say that} I will not serve anything that will make me its slave. ¹³{Some of you say,} “Food exists for a person’s stomach to digest it, and a person’s stomach exists to digest food.” Indeed, {I also say that} God will make food and stomachs unimportant. {While it is true that food exists for a person’s stomach,} the human body does not exist for a person to have improper sex with it. Instead, {the human body} exists to serve the Lord, and the Lord has worked to save the human body. ¹⁴In fact, God made the Lord alive again, and he will work powerfully to make us also alive again.

¹⁵Surely you know that your bodies belong to the Messiah, just as if you were his body parts. Because of that, you should not take your body back and then give it to a prostitute, so that your body belongs to her, just as if you were her body parts. Never do that! ¹⁶Surely you know that a man who has sex with a prostitute unites himself to her as closely as if they shared the same body. {You should know this} because the scripture says, “The {man and the woman, although} two people, will become {like} one person.” ¹⁷In a similar way, any people who unite themselves to the Lord become spiritually one {with the Lord}.

¹⁸Intentionally avoid having improper sex. When people sin, they usually do so without directly hurting their bodies. However, when people have improper sex, they do hurt their own bodies. ¹⁹Surely you know that God has given the Holy Spirit to you. Therefore, your bodies are like temples for the Holy Spirit, since he unites himself to you {like how a god unites himself to his temple}. Because of that, you do not belong to yourselves. ²⁰{Rather, you belong to God, since the Messiah died for you. When he died for you,} it was as if God paid money to buy you. Because {you belong to God}, you must honor him whenever you do anything with your body.

Chapter 7

¹Moving on to what you asked me about, in your letter you said that it is appropriate for people not to have sex with each other. ²On the other hand, people often desire to have sex, even improper sex. Because of that, a husband should stay married to his own wife, and a wife should stay married to her own husband. ³Husbands should regularly have sex with their wives. Similarly, wives should regularly have sex with their husbands. ⁴Wives’ bodies belong to their husbands, not to themselves. Similarly, husbands’ bodies belong to their wives, not to themselves. ⁵You should only stop having sex regularly when both of you agree to do so for a brief time. You should only do this when you want to focus on praying to God, and you should soon resume having sex regularly. If you do not do this quickly, Satan will use how you desire to have sex to entice you to do what is wrong.

⁶I do not command you {to stop having sex regularly in order to focus on praying}. Rather, I am only allowing you {to do so}. ⁷If it were up to me, all people would be like me {and remain unmarried}. However, God gives each person his or her own way to live. Some {people live in} one way, while other people {live in} another way.

⁸Here I am speaking to people who have not married and to women whose husbands have died. The best thing {for these people} is to stay {unmarried} like I do. ⁹However, some people will struggle to control how they desire to have sex. These people should get married, because that is a better choice than constantly desiring to have sex.

¹⁰Here I am speaking what the Lord himself said to people who have gotten married. I require the wives to stay with their husbands. ¹¹Now whenever they do not stay with their husbands, they should not marry again, or they should go back to their husbands. Further, husbands should stay with their wives.

¹²Now to the rest {of you who have a spouse who is not a believer}, the Lord did not speak about this, so I am speaking what I myself command. Some fellow believers have unbelieving wives, and the wives may wish to stay with their believing husbands. In this situation, the husbands should stay with their wives. ¹³Similarly, some fellow believers have unbelieving husbands, and the husbands may wish to stay with their believing wives. In this situation, the wives should stay with their husbands. ¹⁴{You should remain with an unbelieving husband or wife,} because God considers the unbelieving husband to be an acceptable spouse for the believing wife. Similarly, God considers the unbelieving wife to be an acceptable spouse for the believing husband. Because of this, God treats

the children in this situation just like he treats the children of two believing parents. If what I have said were not true, God would treat the children in this situation just like he treats the children of two unbelieving parents.

¹⁵On the other hand, some unbelieving husbands or wives may want to leave their believing spouses. In this situation, the believing spouses should allow them to leave. The believing spouses do not have to stay with their unbelieving husbands or wives. {In any situation like this, remember that} God requires us to be peaceful people.

¹⁶{You should allow an unbelieving spouse to leave} because each wife does not know whether she can help her husband to believe in Jesus. Each husband also does not know whether he can help his wife to believe in Jesus.

¹⁷In general, all people need to behave in ways that fit with what the Lord has appointed them to do and with how God requires them to act. I require people to follow this teaching in every group of believers {that I visit}. ¹⁸There are some people whom others circumcised before they believed in Jesus. These people should not try to become uncircumcised again. There are other people whom others did not circumcise before they believed in Jesus. These people should not try to become circumcised. ¹⁹Whether a person has had someone circumcise them or not does not matter {to us or to God}. On the other hand, doing what God requires of us {does matter to us and to God}.

²⁰All people should serve God faithfully while doing the normal things they were already doing when God changed them. ²¹Some people were slaves when they believed in Jesus. These people should not worry about being slaves. On the other hand, they should make use of any chance they have to become free. ²²{Do not worry about your social position,} because the Lord considers all people who were slaves when they believed in him to be free people now. Similarly, the Messiah considers all people who were free people when they believed in him to be his slaves now. ²³{When Jesus died for you,} it was as if God paid money to buy you. {Because of that,} you should not serve other humans, but only God. ²⁴My fellow believers, all people should serve God faithfully while doing the normal things they were already doing when God changed them.

²⁵I am now moving on to speak about those who have not gotten married. On this issue, I do not have anything that the Lord said to tell you. However, I will tell you what I think is best. {I do this} because God has acted kindly towards me by making me a trustworthy {teacher}. ²⁶What I suggest is that people should not change how they are living. I say this because I know that dangerous things are going to happen soon. ²⁷Some people have gotten engaged. They should not separate. Other people have never gotten engaged. They should not try to become engaged. ²⁸However, a single man or woman who gets married does not sin. I only advise you against getting married because people who get married will experience troubles while they live.

²⁹My fellow believers, what I am about to tell you {is important}. The end times are not far away. Therefore, until then, each man who has a wife should live like a man who does not have a wife. ³⁰Each person who cries should live like a person who does not cry. Each person who is glad should live like a person who is not glad. Each person who acquires anything should live like a person who does not own anything. ³¹Each person who utilizes worldly things should live like a person who does not utilize these things. {You should act in these ways} because God will soon abolish the worldly way of doing things.

³²I want you to care about few things. Single men care about what they can do to serve the Lord. ³³On the other hand, married men care about worldly things, particularly how they can serve their wives. Because of this, they care about two different things{: serving their wives and serving the Lord}. Single women and women who have never gotten married ³⁴care about what they can do to serve the Lord. Their goal is to be completely holy. On the other hand, married women care about worldly things, particularly how they can serve their husbands. ³⁵I have said these things because I think they are helpful for you. I do not want to force you into acting in only one way. Rather, I want you to be able to act honorably and serve the Lord well and attentively.

³⁶In some cases, an engaged man may consider that he might act in sexually improper ways with his fiancée. Further, his fiancée may be fully mature and ready to have sex. In these cases, here is what to do: the man should marry his fiancé. He does not sin {when he does this}, and the two of them should get married. ³⁷In other cases, an engaged man may have made up his mind, and no person or thing has forced him {not to marry}. He can control what he desires, and he has decided for himself {not to marry}. In this case, he can rightly choose not to marry his

fiancée. ³⁸In the end, any man who gets married to his fiancée does a good thing. Further, any man who does not get married {to his fiancée} does a better thing.

³⁹Wives must stay married to their husbands unless their husbands die. Then, they may marry any believing man whom they want to marry. ⁴⁰However, {I think that} any woman whose husband has died will be more blessed if she does not marry again. While that is my opinion, I think that God's Spirit speaks through me.

Chapter 8

¹I am now moving on to speak about meat that someone has offered to another god. All of us {who believe} do know {what is true about other gods. However,} knowing {what is true often} makes people proud. It is loving others that really helps other believers. ²All people who reckon that they understand something do not yet understand it in the way that they should understand it. ³However, God understands and cares for all people who love him.

⁴Now {I will go back to speaking} about whether to eat meat that someone has offered to another god. We {who believe in God} understand that other gods do not really exist. In fact, {we understand} that the only god is the one God. ⁵It is true that there are many things that are in heaven or on earth that people call "gods." In this way, many "gods" and "lords" exist. ⁶However, we {who believe} acknowledge one God, who is the Father. He created everything, and we exist to honor him. We also acknowledge one Lord, who is Jesus the Messiah. He created everything with the Father, and we exist by means of what he does {for us}.

⁷However, some people do not fully understand {what I have said}. They used to worship other gods in the past, and they incompletely understand what is right and wrong. When they eat meat that someone has offered to another god, they feel guilty. ⁸Now food does not connect us with God. Those who do not eat {certain foods} do not miss out {on anything from God}. Also, those who do eat {certain foods} do not receive something extra {from God}. ⁹However, you need to be careful about how you live if you know {that food is not significant}. How you live should not cause someone who incompletely understands what is right and wrong to struggle {to follow Jesus}.

¹⁰{You need to be careful} because fellow believers might observe a believer who knows {what is true about other gods} sitting down to eat {meat} in another god's temple. Those fellow believers, who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, will become confident that they also can eat meat that someone has offered to another god. ¹¹As a result, by acting based on what you know {is true about other gods}, you harm others who incompletely understand what is right and wrong. These are fellow believers, and the Messiah died for them.

¹²When you act in these ways, you sin against fellow believers by leading them, who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, to do what they think is wrong. {When do you this,} you sin against the Messiah too.

¹³Consequently, in cases where what I eat would lead a fellow believer to sin, I will never ever eat meat again{, whether someone has offered it to another god or not}. This way, I do not lead any of my fellow believers to sin.

Chapter 9

¹I am not bound {to eat only certain foods}. Our Lord Jesus sent me to represent him, and I have seen him {with my own eyes}. God has united us to the Lord, and I have worked hard for you because of that. ²Other people may not think that the Messiah sent me to represent him, but you do know that. {You know that} because you proved that the Messiah sent me when God united you to the Lord.

³I will now defend myself against anyone who wants to question {whether the Messiah sent} me {to represent him or not}. ⁴Barnabas and I certainly can require you to send us food and drink. ⁵We certainly can travel around with a wife who believes in the Messiah. This is what the others whom the Messiah has sent to represent him do, including Peter and the Lord's brothers. ⁶It is not true that Barnabas and I are the only ones {who represent the Messiah} who must work {to support ourselves}. ⁷No soldiers ever pay with their own money to serve in the army.

No farmers plant vines and then do not eat what the vines produce. No shepherds take care of sheep and then do not drink the milk that they produce.

⁸What I am arguing does not depend on merely human thinking. Rather, you can read what I am arguing in the law {of Moses}. ⁹Here is what Moses wrote in the law of Moses: "You should not keep an ox from eating the grain when it is helping you separate grain from chaff." God is not primarily interested in oxen{, however}. ¹⁰Rather, God speaks mostly about us {in this law}. God had Moses write this command for us because any person who plows a field should expect to receive some of the crop. Any person who separates the grain from the wheat stalks should also expect to receive some of the crop. ¹¹We proclaimed the good news to you as if we were planting spiritual seeds. Because of that, it would be normal for us to receive financial help from you as if we were receiving some of the crop that grew from the seed that we planted. ¹²Other people have received financial support from you. Barnabas and I deserve even more to receive it from you.

However, we have not asked for any support from you. Rather, we choose to go without things so that we will not keep the good news about the Messiah from spreading. ¹³Surely you know that the people who perform their duties in the temple eat some of the food that people offer in the temple. More specifically, the priests who offer sacrifices on the altar receive part of what people bring to them to offer on the altar. ¹⁴Similarly, the Lord instructed that anyone who preaches the good news should make their living from {preaching} the good news.

¹⁵However, I have not asked for any of this support from you. Further, I am not now writing to you to ask for support for myself. I would prefer to die rather than to have someone take away what I can boast about. ¹⁶Now I cannot boast about preaching the good news, because God requires me to preach it. Indeed, were I to stop preaching the good news, God would discipline me. ¹⁷God would reward me if I preached the good news because I myself chose to. However, I have not chosen to do so, for God himself has told me what I need to do. ¹⁸God still rewards me, however. {He does so} when I preach the good news without requiring people to pay me. I tell people about the good news in this way so that I do not misuse what I am able to require because I preach the good news.

¹⁹{Since I preach the good news for free,} I do not need to serve any humans. However, I choose to serve all humans so that I can help more of them {believe in the Messiah}. ²⁰When I am with Jewish people, I act like a Jewish person. That way, I can help Jewish people {believe in the Messiah}. When I am with people who think they need to obey Moses' law, I act like someone who thinks that he needs to obey Moses' law. While I myself know that I do not need to obey Moses' law, {I act this way} so that I can help the people who think they need to obey Moses' law {believe in the Messiah}. ²¹When I am with people who do not obey Moses' law, I act like someone who does not obey Moses' law. {I act this way} so that I can help the people who do not obey Moses' law {to believe in the Messiah}. Of course, I do obey God's law, since I do what the Messiah commanded. ²²When I am with people who incompletely understand what is right and wrong, I act like someone who incompletely understands what is right and wrong. {I act this way} so that I can help the people who incompletely understand what is right and wrong {to believe in the Messiah}. {As you can see,} when I am with any people, I act like they do so that God might work through all the things I do in order to save some of them. ²³As you can see, I act in all these ways because I want people to believe in the good news. {Further, I do these things} in order that I too will receive what God has promised in the good news.

²⁴Surely you know that all the runners participate in a race, but in the end only one runner wins the race and takes the reward for winning. When you serve God, it is much like this kind of race. You need to work hard to gain what God has promised to you, just like the runner runs hard to win the race. ²⁵All athletes carefully control everything that they do {so that they can win}. They compete for a crown made of leaves that will fall apart. We, however, {control ourselves so that we can receive what God has promised to give us,} which will last forever. ²⁶Because of this, I am like a runner who runs straight toward the finish line. I am like a boxer who strikes an opponent without missing. ²⁷I totally control my body and make it serve me. I do that because I do not want to proclaim the good news to other people but then find that God does not approve of me.

Chapter 10

¹Now I want to remind you, fellow believers, that our Jewish ancestors all followed God when he appeared to them in a cloud. They all walked through the Red Sea when God made a dry path for them through the water. ²{It was as if} someone baptized all of them so that they belonged to Moses. {This happened} when they followed the cloud and walked through the Red Sea. ³All of them together ate the special food that God gave them. ⁴All of them together drank the special water that God gave them. This happened when they drank the water that came out of the special rock that God provided and that followed them. That water was something that the Messiah gave. ⁵However, most of our Jewish ancestors did not please God. {You can tell that this is true} because they died while they traveled through the desert places.

⁶The things that happened to them illustrate how we should act. Through what happened to them, God warns us to avoid doing what is evil, such as the evil things that they did. ⁷You should not worship idols, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. {You can tell that they worshiped idols,} because Moses wrote, "The Israelites started eating and drinking and then worshiped other gods in sexually immoral ways." ⁸We should not have improper sex, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, 23,000 of them died during one day. ⁹We should not challenge the Lord, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, snakes killed them. ¹⁰You should not complain, which is what some of our Jewish ancestors did. Because they did this, a dangerous spiritual being {whom God sent} killed them.

¹¹Those things that our ancestors experienced illustrate {how we should act}. In fact, someone wrote down what happened to them so that we can learn from them, since we are the ones who are experiencing the last days. ¹²As those stories illustrate, any people who think that they firmly believe {in the Messiah} should make sure that they do not fail {to follow the Messiah}. ¹³Other people have experienced the things that tempt you. Further, God will act faithfully. He will not let you experience anything that tempts you if you cannot resist it. Rather, when something tempts you, he will give you what you need to faithfully resist it.

¹⁴Because {of that I have said}, fellow believers whom I love, intentionally avoid worshiping other gods. ¹⁵I am talking this way because I think that you are reasonable people. You should decide for yourselves whether what I am about to say is right or wrong. ¹⁶When we drink the wine that we bless in the Lord's Supper, we together connect ourselves with the Messiah's blood. When we eat the bread, we together connect ourselves with the Messiah's body. ¹⁷We use one loaf of bread {in the Lord's Supper}, and we all together eat pieces of that one loaf. Because we do this, we join ourselves together like we all make up one body.

¹⁸Take the people of Israel as an example. The people who offered something would eat some of what they offered. This means that they connected themselves with the altar{, where the priest would present the rest of what they offered to God}. ¹⁹I am arguing, therefore, that meat that someone has offered to another god and other gods themselves are not powerful or important. ²⁰However, {you should know} that when those who do not worship God offer sacrifices, they are offering them to evil spiritual beings, not to God. I want you to avoid connecting yourselves with evil spiritual beings. ²¹You cannot drink wine that belongs to the Lord and also wine that belongs to evil spiritual beings. You cannot eat food that belongs to the Lord and also food that belongs to evil spiritual beings. ²²Those who do both of those things should expect the Lord to act jealously against them. Further, we are certainly less powerful than he is.

²³{Some of you say,} "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, {I say that} some things are not helpful {to anybody}. {Again, some of you say,} "I can do anything and not become guilty." However, {I say that} some things do not help you grow. ²⁴Do not work hard to gain what is best for yourselves. Rather, {you should work hard to gain} what is best for other people. ²⁵You can eat any food that you buy in the public marketplace. You do not need to find out {where it came from} so that you know whether it is right or wrong {to eat it}. ²⁶{You can do this} because {David wrote}, "The earth and everything connected with it belongs to the Lord." ²⁷At some point, people who do not believe may ask you {to eat with them}, and you may decide to {do so}. When this happens, you can eat all the food that they serve you. You do not need to find out {where it came from} so that you know whether it is

right or wrong {to eat it}. ²⁸(However, someone might tell you that a person offered the food to a god. In this situation, you should not eat the food. {You should act in this way} to benefit the person who told you {about the food} and because of knowing what is right and wrong. ²⁹By “knowing what is right and wrong,” I mean what the other person knows, not what you know.) In general, what another person thinks is right or wrong should not keep me from doing what I am able to do. ³⁰As long as I am grateful to God when I eat any food, no one should speak badly about me because of something for which I thanked God.

³¹To summarize, whenever you eat or drink anything, and indeed whenever you do anything, you should always behave so that you and others honor God. ³²Do not behave in ways that discourage Jewish people, non-Jewish people, or fellow believers from trusting the Messiah. ³³I illustrate {how to do this} with how I live. I always act in ways that everyone around me accepts. I do not work hard to gain what is best for myself. Rather, {I work hard to gain what is best} for other people. {I do this} in order that God will save them.

Chapter 11

¹Do what I do, just like I do what Christ did.

²I commend you because you always think of what I teach and do and because you carefully believe and do what I taught you to believe and do. ³I am telling you that each man comes from the Messiah. A wife comes from her husband. Finally, the Messiah comes from God. ⁴Men might cover their heads when they pray or proclaim what God says. Those who do this shame the person they come from: {the Messiah}. ⁵Now women might bare their heads when they pray or proclaim what God says. Those who do this shame the people they come from: {their husbands}. {You can tell that this is true,} because a woman who bares her head is like a woman whose hair someone has shaved off. ⁶In fact, someone should cut short the hair of any woman who bares her head. Since people shame a woman who has short hair, women should not bare their heads. ⁷Further, on the one hand, men should not cover their heads, because they represent and honor God. On the other hand, wives honor their husbands. ⁸{You can tell that this is true} because God did not make the man Adam from the woman Eve. Rather, he made the woman Eve from the man Adam. ⁹Another {way that you can tell that this is true is} because God did not make the man Adam for the sake of the woman Eve. Rather, he made the woman Eve for the sake of the man Adam. ¹⁰Because {wives honor their husbands}, women should control {what they wear} on their heads. {They should do this also} because of the powerful spiritual beings.

¹¹Despite all that, when God unites people to the Messiah, women cannot exist without men, and men cannot exist without women. ¹²In fact, while the woman {Eve} did come from the man {Adam}, men only exist because women give birth to them. However, everything that exists{, including men and women,} comes from God. ¹³You yourselves should decide whether women who pray to God without covering their heads act appropriately or not. ¹⁴You can learn from observing the way things are that it is dishonorable for men to have long hair. ¹⁵However, {you can also learn from observing the way things are} that it is honorable for women to have long hair. {This is} because God has given women their long hair, which functions to cover {their heads}. ¹⁶Now if any people consider arguing about what I have said, neither we nor God's churches allow women to uncover their heads {when they pray or prophesy}.

¹⁷I am now going to instruct you about another topic, and I cannot commend you in this area. {I cannot commend you,} because you harm fellow believers instead of helping them when you gather as fellow believers. ¹⁸Here is the first thing I will speak about: some people have told me that you split up into rival groups when you gather as fellow believers to worship God. I believe that this is partly true. ¹⁹{I believe it} because there need to be disagreements in your group. That way, it may become clear {to everyone} whom in your group God considers to be acceptable {to him}. ²⁰Because of these divisions, you are not actually eating the Lord's Supper when you gather as fellow believers together {to eat}. ²¹During your meals, some people are eating their own food before {others receive some}. In this way, some people do not have enough to eat, while other people are getting drunk. ²²You act in these ways despite the fact that you can eat food and drink wine in your own houses. Instead, though, you think

contemptuously about God's church. In particular, you shame people who have less than you do. You should already know what I will say to you. I am not going to commend you for doing these things. I will definitely not do that!

²³I have already told you what I learned from the Lord about the night when Judas handed the Lord Jesus over {to the authorities, who executed him}. During that night, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread. ²⁴He thanked God {for the loaf of bread}, and then he tore it into pieces {so that the disciples could eat it}. Then he said, "This {bread} is my body, which I am offering for your sake. Repeat what I have done so that you remember {how I am offering} myself {for you}." ²⁵Just as {he picked up the loaf of bread}, he also picked up the cup {of wine} after they had eaten. He said, "This cup {of wine} is the new covenant {that I am inaugurating} with my blood. Repeat what I have done whenever you drink from this cup of wine so that you remember {how I am offering} myself {for you}." ²⁶This means that, until the Lord comes back, whenever {you participate in the Lord's Supper by} eating this bread and drinking {wine from} this cup, you announce that the Lord has died.

²⁷So then, some people, while participating in the Lord's Supper, might eat the bread or drink {wine from} the cup in a way that dishonors {the Messiah}. God will hold them responsible for {how they have acted against} the Lord's body and blood. ²⁸To avoid that, believers should carefully consider how they are behaving. Then, they can eat the bread and drink {wine} from the cup. ²⁹{You should carefully consider how you are behaving,} because some people eat and drink {during the Lord's Supper} but do not recognize {that God has united fellow believers to the Lord as closely as if they were} the Lord's body. How those people eat and drink {during the Lord's Supper} will result in God punishing them. ³⁰Because {people in your group have acted in that improper way}, many of them have gotten sick and some of them have died. ³¹So, we believers really should carefully consider how we are acting {before we participate in the Lord's Supper}. Then, God will not punish us. ³²However, when the Lord does punish us, he does it to train us. That way, God does not include us when he declares everyone who does not believe in the Messiah to be guilty.

³³In conclusion, my fellow believers, when you gather together to eat {the Lord's Supper}, you should not start eating until everyone has received food and drink. ³⁴Any people who are {so} hungry {that they start eating before everyone has received food and drink} should eat at their own houses. That way, when you gather together as fellow believers, God will not punish you.

I have not said everything that I need to say. So, I will instruct you about those things whenever I visit you.

Chapter 12

¹I am now moving on to speak about how God's Spirit specially empowers believers. I want to inform you, my fellow believers, about these things. ²You remember {what you did} when you were not believers. You worshiped other gods. These other gods cannot even speak, but you did whatever {wrong things people told you to do} to worship these other gods. ³So then, I am informing you that a person who curses Jesus does not speak with the power of God's Spirit. On the other hand, a person who says that Jesus is Lord must be speaking with the power of the Holy Spirit.

⁴The Spirit empowers people in many different ways, but there is only one Spirit. ⁵People serve the Lord in many different ways, but there is only one Lord. ⁶People work for God in many different ways, but there is only one God. He is the one who empowers all people to function in all these ways.

⁷Each believer receives from God specific ways in which God's Spirit works through them to help fellow believers.

⁸For example, God's Spirit empowers some believers to speak wisely. Other believers can speak knowledgeably, and the same Spirit empowers them to do this. ⁹The same Spirit empowers some believers to trust God in special ways. The same Spirit empowers other believers to heal others. ¹⁰Other believers can do powerful things. Other believers can speak messages from God. Other believers can decide whether something comes from God's Spirit or not. Some believers can speak unknown languages. Other believers can interpret those unknown languages. ¹¹The

same Spirit works to empower believers to do all these things. There is just one Holy Spirit, and he decides how to work specifically through each believer.

¹²{We consider} a person's body to be a unity, but the body has many body parts. So, all those body parts, no matter how many there are, together make up one body. {We can think about} the Messiah in a similar way. ¹³Now, {God has united us together as closely as if} we made up one body. {This happened when} people baptized us, with the result that we have the one Spirit. {We make up this one body} even though some of us are Jewish people and others are non-Jewish people, and even though some of us are slaves and others are free people. Further, we all shared in this one Spirit just like we all shared a drink from one cup.

¹⁴As you know, one body part does not make up a body. Rather, it takes many body parts {to make up a body}.

¹⁵Imagine that your foot {could talk to you, and it} said that, since it was not a hand, it could not belong to your body. That reason does not keep it from belonging to your body. ¹⁶Again, imagine that your ear {could talk to you, and it} said that, since it was not an eye, it could not belong to your body. That reason does not keep it from belonging to your body. ¹⁷Imagine that only eyes made up your body. You would not be able to hear anything! Imagine that only ears made up your body. You would not be able to smell anything! ¹⁸But here is what is true {about the body}: God decided how each body part should function, and he connected each body part to the body for a specific reason. ¹⁹Imagine that all {your body parts} were the same {kind of} body part. You would not really have a body at all! ²⁰But here is what is true {about the body}: many {different} body parts exist. However, {together they make up} one body. ²¹Imagine again that your body parts could talk. An eye would never tell a hand, "I do not need you." Similarly, a head would never tell feet, "I do not need you." ²²Rather, what is true is that the body parts that we consider to be the delicate ones are actually necessary. ²³Further, we more highly value the body parts that we think of as less valuable. We treat our indecent body parts more decently, ²⁴but we do not treat our decent body parts in any special way. In the end, God is the one who put all the body parts together into one body, and he makes the less valuable parts more valuable. ²⁵{God did this} in order that the body would not split up into different parts. Instead, the body parts work together and do not privilege one body part over other body parts. ²⁶So, all the body parts hurt when one body part is hurting. All the body parts celebrate when somebody praises one body part.

²⁷{I say all this because} you all are {like} the Messiah's body. Each of you is {like} a body part {in that body}. ²⁸In line with that, God has specially empowered the people who worship him. First, some people are those whom God has sent to represent the Messiah. Second, some people proclaim what God says. Third, some people teach other believers. Further, some people do powerful things. Others can heal others, help other believers, guide the group of believers, or speak unknown languages. ²⁹Only some believers are those whom God has sent to represent the Messiah. Only some proclaim what God says. Only some teach other believers. Only some do powerful things.

³⁰Only some heal others. Only some speak unknown languages. Only some interpret {those unknown languages}.

³¹Now I want you to eagerly seek the most beneficial gifts. Next, I will tell you about the very best thing you can do.

Chapter 13

¹Imagine that I could speak many human and angelic languages, but I did not love others. I would be {able to make much noise,} like a loud metal instrument{, but I would not be helping anyone}. ²Again, imagine that I could proclaim what God says, that I could comprehend and know everything, and that I believed so much that I could make mountains change places. But imagine further that I did not love others. Because of that, nothing else matters. ³Yet again, imagine that I gifted everything I owned {to people who needed food}, and that I did not protect my own body, with the result that people would honor me. But imagine further that I did not love others. {Because I did not love others}, none of those things that I did help me at all.

⁴Those who love others wait patiently and act graciously. They do not wish that others would lose the good things that they have. They do not say great things about themselves or act like they are great. ⁵They do not do shameful things. They do not care only about themselves. They do not quickly become angry. They do not keep track of what

others have done wrong. ⁶They do not celebrate when people do bad things. Instead, they celebrate what is true.

⁷They always put up with {others}. They always believe {that God will do what is best}, and they are always confident {that God will do what he has promised}. They always persevere {when bad things happen}.

⁸Those who love others never cease doing so. However, someday people will no longer proclaim what God says. Someday, people will stop speaking unknown languages. Someday, people will no longer know special things.

⁹{These things will no longer happen,} because we know special things incompletely, and we proclaim what God says incompletely. ¹⁰So, when we experience what is complete {when Jesus comes back}, what is incomplete will no longer matter. ¹¹{Here is an analogy:} when we were young, we talked as children talk. We thought as children think. We made decisions as children make decisions. But when we grew up, we stopped acting as children do.

¹²Right now, we see {God} indirectly, as if we saw a reflection in a mirror. When {Jesus comes back}, however, {we will see God} in person. Right now, we know {God} incompletely. When {Jesus comes back}, however, we will know God just as much as he knows us. ¹³In the end, there are three things that we will always keep doing. We will believe {in the Messiah}, confidently expect {God to do what he has promised}, and love {God and other people}. However, loving {God and others} is the most important out of these three things.

Chapter 14

¹You should seek to love others always. Also, you should eagerly seek that the Holy Spirit specially empowers you, particularly that you might be able to proclaim what God says. ²{You should desire this} because people who talk in unknown languages are talking with God, not with other people. {This is} because no one knows what they are saying. Rather, they say secret things as the Holy Spirit empowers them. ³On the other hand, those who proclaim what God says do talk to other people. They help other believers become stronger, urge other believers to act in proper ways, and comfort other believers. ⁴People who talk in unknown languages help themselves become stronger. On the other hand, people who proclaim what God says help the group of believers become stronger.

⁵I want all of you to talk in unknown languages. What I want even more, however, is that you might proclaim what God says. Proclaiming what God says is more important and helpful than talking in unknown languages. Of course, if someone explains {the unknown language}, then it {too} can help believers become stronger.

⁶Here {is what I am trying to say}, my fellow believers: imagine that I{, for example,} visited you, and I talked in unknown languages. I would not be helping you at all. To actually help you, I would need to reveal things {to you}, help you know things, proclaim what God says {to you}, or teach {you}. ⁷Even things that are not alive but that we use to make sounds {illustrate what I am saying}. {When someone plays} a flute or a harp, the instrument must make various distinct sounds. Otherwise, no one would understand what a person plays on the flute or the harp, {since all the sounds would be the same}. ⁸Further, suppose that a trumpet did not make clear sounds {when a person used it to warn others}. No one would know that they needed to get ready to fight the enemy. ⁹Whenever you do not use words that other people recognize when you talk, you are like {an instrument that does not make a clear sound}. No one will comprehend what you are saying, and you will be {like} a person who talks to nobody. ¹⁰It seems to be true that a great many varieties of languages exist. Every one of them communicates clearly. ¹¹So, when I{, for example,} do not understand how a language communicates, I am a stranger to everyone who speaks {that language}, and they are strangers to me. ¹²So, here is what you must do: because you desire that the Holy Spirit specially empowers you, you should strive more and more {to use what the Holy Spirit empowers you to do} to help the group of believers become stronger.

¹³Therefore, those who talk in unknown languages should ask God to enable them to explain {what they are saying}. ¹⁴When I{, for example,} pray {to God} in an unknown language, only part of me is praying since I am not thinking about what I am saying. ¹⁵Therefore, here is what {you and I should do}. We should pray {to God} not only with just some parts of us but also by thinking about what we are saying. We should sing {to God} not only with just some parts of us but also by thinking about what we are singing. ¹⁶Imagine that people who do not understand {unknown languages} hear you praising God when you are using just some parts of you{, and you are not thinking about what you are saying}. Those people will not be able to participate when you praise God because

they do not understand {the unknown language} that you are speaking. ¹⁷In this situation, you praise God appropriately. However, you do not help other people become stronger. ¹⁸I give thanks to God that I talk in unknown languages more than you all do. ¹⁹However, when I gather together with fellow believers to worship God, I want to speak only a few words that I think about. In this way, I can teach other believers and {not just myself}. {It is better for me to do that} than {to say} a million words in an unknown language.

²⁰My fellow believers, I do not want you to be foolish {about these things, like} little children {are}. Rather, you should know much {about these things, like} a fully grown adult {does}. You should {only} be {like} little children by not doing what is wrong. ²¹The prophet Isaiah wrote in the Scriptures what the Lord says,

"I will talk to my people Israel

by means of people who speak foreign languages.

However, they will not listen to me in this way."

²²Therefore, talking in unknown languages signifies that God judges people who do not believe {in the Messiah}, not people who do believe {in the Messiah}. On the other hand, proclaiming what God says {signifies that God acts kindly toward} people who believe {in the Messiah}, not toward people who do not believe {in the Messiah}. ²³So, imagine that the whole group of believers gathered together to worship God, and all of you talked in unknown languages. Imagine further that people who do not understand {unknown languages} or who do not believe {in the Messiah} visit your group. They will tell {others} that you are crazy. ²⁴On the other hand, imagine that all of you proclaimed what God says. Imagine further that any people who do not believe {in the Messiah} or who do not understand {unknown languages} visit your group. Everything that you say will show them and confront them with {what they have done wrong}. ²⁵{In this way,} everyone will know the things that these {visitors} hide from others. In response, they will kneel down and worship God. They will proclaim {to others} that God truly is with you.

²⁶My fellow believers, here is what I mean. Whenever you gather together {to worship God}, each believer {has something to do}. Some sing songs, others teach, others reveal things, others speak in an unknown language, others interpret an unknown language. Believers should do all these things to help other believers become stronger. ²⁷When believers are talking in unknown languages, only two or three at most {should speak}. They should talk one after the other, and someone needs to explain {what they are saying}. ²⁸On the other hand, when believers gather to worship God and a person who can explain the unknown language is not there, everyone who can talk in unknown languages should keep quiet. Instead {of talking out loud}, they should talk {in unknown languages} privately to God.

²⁹Similarly, {around} two or three people who proclaim what God says should speak. Everyone else should decide whether {what they say} is correct or incorrect. ³⁰Now, whenever God reveals something to a person who is listening {to someone else proclaim what God says when believers gather together}, the person who is speaking should stop speaking. ³¹{You should do that} so that everyone has a chance to proclaim what God says, one after the other. In that way, everyone learns something, and everyone becomes stronger. ³²Those who proclaim what God says control how and when they proclaim it. ³³{That is true} because what is peaceful and orderly, not what is disorderly, characterizes God.

{I want you to act} like all the {other} people whom God has set apart for himself act when they gather together to worship God. ³⁴Wives should keep quiet when believers gather together {and their husbands are speaking}. They should not talk but rather honor and obey {their husbands}. {They should do this} because that is what we find in {God's} law. ³⁵Now, when wives want to learn more {about what their husbands are saying}, they should ask their husbands questions in their own houses. {They should do this} because wives who talk when believers gather together {and their husbands are speaking} shame {themselves and their families}. ³⁶{If you dislike what I have said,} remember that you are not the source of what God has said, and you are not the only ones who have heard {and believed what God has said}. ³⁷All people who consider themselves to be those who proclaim what God says or those whom the Holy Spirit has specially empowered must recognize that the Lord himself requires what I am

writing to you. ³⁸On the other hand, you should not recognize {as authoritative} any people who do not recognize {that the Lord requires what I have said}.

³⁹In the end, my fellow believers, eagerly seek to proclaim what God says. Further, do not prohibit people from speaking unknown languages. ⁴⁰Finally, {when you gather together to worship God}, you should always act in honorable and orderly ways.

Chapter 15

¹Next, I am informing you, fellow believers, about the good news that I told you about. You learned this good news {from me}, and you firmly believe it. ²When you continue to firmly believe the message that I preached to you, God saves you by means of that message. Otherwise, you believed {the message} for nothing.

³Here is one of the first things that I told you, which I learned {from the Lord}: the Messiah died {on the cross} to take away our sins, just as {the authors of} the holy books {wrote}. ⁴People buried him, but during the third day {after that}, God made him alive again, just as {the authors of} the holy books {wrote}. ⁵He appeared to Peter and then to the {rest of Jesus'} 12 {closest followers}. ⁶After that, he appeared at one time to greater than 500 fellow believers. Although some of these people have died, almost all of them are still alive. ⁷After that, he appeared to James and then to everyone whom he sent to represent him. ⁸Finally, after he appeared to all of them, he appeared to me also. So, {because I became one whom Jesus sent to represent him after everyone else}, I am like a baby that was born in an unusual way. ⁹In fact, I am less significant and honorable than every other person whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Indeed, since I tried to destroy those who believe in the Messiah, I do not deserve it when others call me one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. ¹⁰However, God graciously made me one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. Further, what he has given me has resulted in great things. In fact, I worked harder than all the other {ones whom the Messiah sent to represent him}. Of course, it was not really I {who worked so hard}. Instead, it was God graciously working through me {who did so much}. ¹¹In the end, both I and the other apostles proclaim the good news that I have described, and you trusted this good news.

¹²Because all believers say that God made the Messiah alive again, no one in your group should be claiming that people who have died will not live again. ¹³Suppose {that it were true} that people who have died will not live again. {In that case,} God did not make the Messiah alive again. ¹⁴Suppose {that it is true} that God did not make the Messiah alive again. In that case, it was for no reason that we proclaimed {the good news} and you believed it. ¹⁵Further, we would be people who tell lies about God, because we declared before God that he made the Messiah alive again when he really did not. This would all be true were God not to make those who have died alive again. ¹⁶{You can tell that this is true when you} suppose that God does not make people who have died alive again. {In that case,} God did not make even the Messiah alive again. ¹⁷Suppose {that it is true} that God did not make the Messiah alive again. {In that case,} you believed {the good news} for no reason, and sin continues to control you. ¹⁸In that case again, the believers who have died will never live again. ¹⁹Suppose that we can confidently expect the Messiah {to help us} only before we die. {In that case,} all people should feel sorry for us more than {they feel sorry} for anyone else.

²⁰But here is what is true: God has made the Messiah alive again, and he is the first of those who have died {whom God will make alive again}. ²¹{You can tell that this is true,} because people die through what the one man {Adam} did. So also people who have died will live again through what the one man {Jesus} did. ²²What I mean is that, just as all people end up dying because God united them to Adam, in the same way all {believers} will live again because God unites them to the Messiah. ²³Now, all people {who will live again} do so in turn: first the Messiah and then those who belong to the Messiah when he comes {back again}. ²⁴After that, what everything that God has created is waiting for {will happen}. At that time, the Messiah will get rid of everyone and everything that rules and governs and controls. Then, he will present God, {who is our} Father, with the kingdom {so that God rules over everything}. ²⁵Here is how {that works}: God has decided that the Messiah will rule until whenever he has conquered all those who oppose him. ²⁶The last thing that opposes Christ that he will get rid of is that people die.

²⁷Now, {David wrote,} “he made him conquer everything that opposes him.” Of course, “everything” does not include God, who is the one who “made him conquer everything.” ²⁸So, after he has conquered everything, then God the Son will submit to the one who made him conquer everything. In this way, God will conquer and rule all things.

²⁹Now, consider people who baptize others to help those who are dead. Further, suppose again that God never makes people who have died alive again. {In that case,} there is no reason for people to baptize others to help those who have died. ³⁰Even more, {in that case,} there is no reason for we {who proclaim the good news} to constantly endanger ourselves {as we do}. ³¹Indeed, I risk dying very frequently. I swear {that this is true} by how I boast about you, fellow believers, which I do because God has united all of us to the Messiah, {who is} Jesus our Lord. ³²Suppose that I was thinking about merely human things while I struggled against those who opposed me when I visited the city of Ephesus. {In that case, struggling against them} does not benefit me at all. Suppose again that God does not make people who have died alive again. {In that case,} we should {do what many people say to do}: eat {food}, and drink {wine}, because we will die very soon. ³³You should not believe what is wrong. {This popular saying is true:} “Evil friends lead astray a person who normally does what is proper.” ³⁴I want you to start acting alertly and properly. You should not keep doing what is wrong. {I command these things} because some people in your group do not know God. I say that in order to make you feel ashamed

³⁵Now a person may ask about the way in which the people who have died live again and about what form they will take. ³⁶{If you do not know the answers to those questions,} you are not thinking clearly! {Just think about this:} a seed that you put in the ground must die before it can grow. ³⁷{Speaking about} a seed that you put in the ground, {you know that} it is not in the form of the plant. Rather, it is just the seed. This is true whether {we are speaking about} wheat or some other crop. ³⁸Indeed, God makes seeds grow into the forms that he chooses, and each kind of seed has a specific form {into which it grows}. ³⁹The physical parts of different living beings vary. For example, humans, mammals, birds, and fish all have different kinds of physical parts. ⁴⁰Some things exist in heaven, and other things exist on earth. The forms of things in heaven are glorious in one way, while the forms of things on earth are glorious in another way. ⁴¹{Further,} the sun, moon, and stars are glorious in different ways. In fact, each star is glorious in its own specific way.

⁴²Here is the way {all that applies to how} people who have died live again. People put a decaying body into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it can never die. ⁴³People put a body that receives no respect into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that everyone respects it. People put a frail body into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it is strong. ⁴⁴People put a body that belongs to this world into the ground, but God makes it alive again so that it belongs to the world that God will renew. Just as some bodies belong to this world, so some bodies belong to the world that God will renew.

⁴⁵{You can tell that this is true} because Moses wrote, “God made the first human, Adam, as a living being who belonged to this world.” {On the other hand, Jesus, who is like} another Adam, now belongs to the world that God will renew and gives life to others. ⁴⁶Now {the first Adam’s} body that belongs to this world existed first, and only after that does {the last Adam’s body} exist that belongs to the world that God will renew. ⁴⁷{Adam, who represents} the first {kind of} human, belonged on the earth. {In fact,} God made him from dust. {On the other hand, Jesus, who represents} the second {kind of} human, belongs in heaven. ⁴⁸All people who belong on the earth are like Adam. All those who belong in heaven are like Jesus. ⁴⁹Our bodies currently are like {Adam’s body} that belongs to this world. In the same way, we should live in such a way that our bodies will eventually be like {Jesus’ body,} which belongs to the world that God will renew.

⁵⁰Listen to this, my fellow believers: human bodies as they currently exist cannot participate in God’s kingdom that lasts forever, since they fall apart and die. ⁵¹Pay attention! I am going to tell you something that God has now revealed. Not all of us will die, but God will transform all of us. ⁵²{He will transform us} in one moment, as fast as a person blinks an eye. {This will happen} when {an angel blows} the trumpet that signals that this world is ending. When {an angel} blows that trumpet, God will make those who have died live again so that they can never die, and he will transform everyone who still lives. ⁵³So, bodies that fall apart and die need to transform into bodies that last

forever and can never die. ⁵⁴When our bodies that fall apart and die transform into bodies that last forever and can never die, at that time what the prophets wrote about will finally happen:

“God has made it so that people no longer die.”

⁵⁵{Further,}

“When people die, this does not destroy or hurt them.”

⁵⁶People die because sin causes them to die, and that happens because the law specifies dying as the penalty for sin. ⁵⁷However, I praise God because he has enabled us to conquer {how we sin and die}. {He has done this} by means of what our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, has done.

⁵⁸So then, fellow believers whom I love, firmly believe {what you know is true}. Consistently serve the Lord more and more. {You should do these things} because you know that what you do {to serve the Lord} will result in great things, since God has united you to the Lord.

Chapter 16

¹I am now moving on to speak about the money that I am collecting for God's people {who are Jewish}. I want you to do what I instructed the groups of believers {who live} in the region of Galatia to do. ²During each Sunday, every one of you should take some money out of whatever you have earned and save it. That way, I will not need to collect money when I visit you. ³Choose some trustworthy people from your group. When I visit you, I will have them take the money {that you have collected} to the city of Jerusalem. Also, I will give them letters {that say that I have authorized them}. ⁴You and I may decide that I should go {to Jerusalem} as well. In that case, the people {whom you choose} will travel with me.

⁵I am going to visit you after I travel through the region of Macedonia, which is the way I will be traveling. ⁶In fact, I may spend some time with you, maybe the whole winter. That way, you can assist me in traveling to wherever I decide to go next. ⁷{I am making these plans} because I would rather wait to be with you for a long time than visit you right now for just a short time. I confidently expect to do this as long as it is what the Lord wants {me to do}. ⁸For now, I plan on remaining here in the city of Ephesus until the Pentecost festival. ⁹{I am remaining here} because God has allowed me to effectively and freely proclaim the good news. {Further, I need to resist} the large number of people who are working against me.

¹⁰Whenever Timothy arrives {in your city}, make sure that he feels safe when he is with you. {You should do this} because he serves the Lord {by proclaiming the good news}, just like I do. ¹¹So, do not treat him disrespectfully. Rather, act in a friendly way by assisting him in traveling back to me. {You should do this} because I anticipate that he will come back to me with the other believers {who are traveling to visit me}.

¹²I am now moving on to speak about our fellow believer, Apollos. I firmly urged him to visit you with the other believers {who were traveling to visit you}. However, he firmly decided that it was not the right time to visit you. Instead, he will visit you when he thinks that it is the right time.

¹³Watch out {for what is wrong}! Firmly believe {the good news}! Be courageous! Be determined! ¹⁴You should focus on loving others whenever you think or do anything.

¹⁵You know that those who live in the house of Stephanas were the first people {to believe the good news} in the region of Achaia. Further, they have chosen to serve God's people. I ask you, my fellow believers, ¹⁶to honor and obey them and other people like them. In fact, {you should honor and obey} every person who works hard {to proclaim the good news} with us. ¹⁷I am happy that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived here. {That is} because they have allowed me to connect with you all even when you are not with me. ¹⁸They encouraged and energized both me and you. Therefore, you should honor them and other people like them.

¹⁹The groups of believers here in the region of Asia say hello to you. Aquila and Priscilla, as those whom God has also united to the Lord, say hello to you affectionately. The believers that gather in their house {also say hello to you}. ²⁰All the fellow believers {who are with me} say hello to you. Welcome each other in a loving way.

²¹I, Paul, say hello {to you}. I am writing {these last words} myself {instead of having my scribe write them}. ²²May God curse everyone who fails to love the Lord. I pray that the Lord returns soon. ²³{I pray that} the Lord Jesus will be gracious to you. ²⁴I continue to love all of you, since God has united us together with Jesus the Messiah. May it be so!

2 Corinthians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Timothy, our fellow believer, {is with me}. God chose to send me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. {I send this letter} to {you who are part of} the group of believers belonging to God, which is in the city of Corinth. {I} also {send this letter} to all the believers who live throughout the region of Achaia. ²{May} God, {who is} our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

³May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah—he is our merciful Father and our God who always comforts us. ⁴God comforts us whenever we suffer. He does that so that we can comfort others who are suffering in any way. God enables us to comfort them in the very same way as he comforts us. ⁵You see, the Messiah suffered a lot for us, and now we continue to suffer as the Messiah did because we belong to him. But now the Messiah also comforts us in the same abundant amount. ⁶So whenever people cause us to suffer, it is so that God may comfort you and protect you spiritually. Whenever God comforts us, it is so that he may also comfort you. God does this as you patiently endure when people cause you to suffer just as people cause us to suffer. ⁷We know that God will also comfort you as you suffer like we suffer. Therefore, we are very confident that you will continue {trusting in Jesus}.

⁸For example, fellow believers, we want you to know about the bad things that happened to us in the province of Asia. They were so difficult that we felt that we could not endure them. We felt certain that we were going to die. ⁹We felt like a person feels when he has heard a judge say, “I condemn you to die.” But God allowed us to feel that way so that we would learn to not rely on ourselves but, instead, to rely on God. He causes people who have died to live again. ¹⁰Even though it seemed to us that we would certainly die, God rescued us from the people who wanted to kill us, and he will continue to rescue us {from similar people}. We confidently expect that he will rescue us again ¹¹as you help us by praying for us. Please do pray for us so that many people will thank God for what he will graciously do for us because many people prayed for us.

¹²We are proud that we can honestly say that we have behaved toward all people in a holy and sincere way, as God has enabled us to do. We do not behave in the way that unbelievers think is wise. Instead, God graciously guides us, especially {as we interact} with you. ¹³To see this, look at my letters. In all of my letters to you I have written only what you can {easily} read and understand. I hope that {soon} you will understand {us} completely ¹⁴just as you partially understand us {already}. Then when our Lord Jesus returns, you will be just as proud of us as we will be proud of you.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶Because I was confident that you were proud of me, I planned to visit you once on my way to the province of Macedonia, and then to visit you again as I returned from there. In that way, you would benefit twice from having me with you. Also, you could help supply what I would need to go from your city to the province of Judea. ¹⁷I intended to visit you those two times{, but then I did not come the second time}. That does not mean that I changed my plan lightly. I do not make or change my plans according to what I might desire at the time. I do not say, “Yes, I will do that” and then quickly say, “No, I will not do it.” ¹⁸Just as God is faithful, we are completely sincere in everything that we say to you. We would never say, “Yes” when we really think, “No.” ¹⁹I and Silvanus and Timothy taught you about the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. {You know that} he would never say, “Yes” if what he meant was, “No.” Because of who he is, our message about him has also remained consistent and dependable. ²⁰Because of Jesus, we can rely on all of the promises of God. Jesus fulfills them all. Therefore, Jesus is also the one who enables us to say, “Yes, it is true” when we praise God. ²¹It is God who causes us, along with you, to keep on believing strongly in the Messiah. God is also the one who has given us his Spirit so that we can serve him. ²²God

gave us the Holy Spirit to live within us. That shows both that we belong to him and that he will also do for us everything else that he has promised to do for us.

²³So now I will tell you why I changed my mind and did not visit you again as I intended to do. May God strike me dead if I am lying, but he knows that what I am telling you is true. The reason that I did not return to Corinth was so that I might not grieve you by having to speak to you severely about the wrong things that you have done.

²⁴When I say that, I do not mean that we are your masters who give you orders about what to believe and do. Instead, everything that we tell you {about living for God} is so that you will be joyful. We do not need to command you, because God himself tells you what to believe and do.

Chapter 2

¹{I have not visited you} because I have chosen to avoid visiting you if it hurts you and me like it did last time {I visited you}. ²{I chose not to visit you again} because, when I hurt you, I have hurt the only people who can make me glad. ³I already wrote {in my previous letter} what I am now saying {to you}. {I wrote those things} so that, when I next visited you, you would not hurt me, and I would be glad about you as I should. {I wrote those things because} I was sure about all of you that you would be glad when I was glad. ⁴I suffered greatly and hurt inside when I wrote {that previous letter} to you. In fact, I wept {while I wrote it}. {I sent it to you} so that you would realize how much I care for you. I did not intend to hurt you.

⁵However, the person who has hurt others did not really hurt me. Rather, that person hurt some {of you}. {I use the word "some"} so that I do not include all of you {as those whom that person hurt}. ⁶Most of you together have disciplined that person. {You do not need to do} anything more. ⁷So then, instead {of disciplining that person}, you should now forgive and encourage that person. Otherwise, the person will become very sad and give up.

⁸Therefore, I encourage you to show publicly that you care for that person. ⁹Another reason for which I wrote {that previous letter} was in order that I could find out for sure if you would do everything that I asked {you to do}. ¹⁰In the end, when you forgive any person for anything, I too forgive that person. In fact, I have forgiven {that person} for what {that person did}, even though it was basically nothing. {I did that} to help you, as the Messiah desires.

¹¹{We should forgive others} so that Satan will not control us. Indeed, we know all about his plans {to control us}.

¹²{To return to how I traveled,} when I arrived in the city of Troas, the Lord Jesus made it possible for me to proclaim the good news about the Messiah effectively. ¹³However, since my fellow believer Titus was not {in the city of Troas}, I continued to be anxious about {what happened when he visited you}. Therefore, I said goodbye to the believers there and left to travel to the region of Macedonia.

¹⁴Now we praise God! {He is the one} who, because he has united us to the Messiah, continually includes us as he conquers {his enemies}. Further, he uses us to reveal to people in many places what God is like. ¹⁵In fact, we are like a pleasant smell that comes from Christ and that pleases God. {We are like this smell} when we are with people whom God is rescuing and when we are with people who are passing away. ¹⁶Those {who are passing away think that we are like} a smell that comes from a dead body and that causes people to die. On the other hand, those {whom God is rescuing think that we are like} a smell that comes from a living thing and that causes people to live. No one can perfectly {proclaim the good news in that way}! ¹⁷{You can tell that we do not do so perfectly} because we do not sell the message that God has given us for money, like many other people do. Rather, we only want to serve God, not to gain something. Indeed, {we proclaim the good news} because that is what God sent us {to do}. So, as those whom God has united to the Messiah, we proclaim {the good news} to please God{, not people}.

Chapter 3

¹We are not going to prove to you a second time that we are trustworthy. As you know, you do not need to write or receive a note that proves that we are trustworthy, even though {you might need to do those things} for other

people. ²It is you all who function like a note {that proves that we are trustworthy}. When we care for each other, all people realize that we are trustworthy, just as if they read {a note from you}. ³Everyone knows that you are like a note that the Messiah wrote and that we delivered. {The Messiah} did not write {this note} on stone slabs using dye. Rather, {it is as if he wrote it} inside you by working through the Holy Spirit, {who is} the only real God.

⁴I say those things because we are sure about {what} God {thinks of us}. {We are sure} because the Messiah makes {us sure}. ⁵Of course, we cannot {proclaim the good news} well on our own, and we do not think that anything we do well is because of us. Rather, God enables us {to proclaim the good news} well. ⁶He has also enabled us to act on behalf of the new agreement. The Holy Spirit gives {this new agreement}, so it is not just words that someone wrote down. {This is important} because {people who rely on} the Holy Spirit will live, but {people who rely on} words that someone wrote down will die.

⁷Further, when Moses acted on behalf of {the old agreement that condemned people} to die, God carved the words {of the agreement} onto stone slabs. What Moses did was glorious enough that the Israelites could not gaze at his face afterwards because it {reflected how} glorious {God is}, although that would eventually go away. ⁸So then, when people act on behalf of {the new agreement that gives} the Holy Spirit, that is even more glorious. ⁹Indeed, when Moses acted on behalf of {the old agreement that led to God} condemning people, it was glorious. So then, when people act on behalf of {the new agreement that leads to people becoming} righteous, it is even more glorious! ¹⁰In fact, the glorious {old agreement} does not look glorious at all because of how glorious {the new agreement} is. ¹¹Indeed, {the old agreement} that is going away was glorious. So then, {the new agreement} that will last forever is even more glorious!

¹²So then, since we confidently expect {to receive} these {glorious} things, we behave very boldly. ¹³{We are} not like Moses, who wore a cloth that hid his face. That way, the Israelites could not gaze at how his face stopped reflecting how glorious God is. ¹⁴In fact, the Israelites did not understand {what God revealed}. Indeed, even now, when someone reads {the Scriptures that contain} the old agreement, {it is as if} the cloth that Moses wore keeps people from understanding {it}. That is because no one can understand {these Scriptures} until God unites them to the Messiah. ¹⁵Indeed, even now, when someone reads the Law of Moses, it is as if that cloth keeps people from understanding it. ¹⁶However, when people begin to trust the Lord {God}, God enables them to understand {the Law of Moses}, just as if he removed that cloth. ¹⁷When I speak of the Lord {God}, I mean the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enables {people to understand the Scriptures}. ¹⁸So, all of us {who believe} show how glorious the Lord {God} is, and {we do so} without a cloth covering our faces. God is changing us so that we are like {the Messiah}. In this way, the glorious Lord, who is the Holy Spirit, makes us glorious.

Chapter 4

¹Because of those things, and because God mercifully enabled us to act on behalf of {the new agreement}, we do not give up. ²Rather, we refuse to do anything that we would hide because it is disgraceful. We do not try to deceive others, and we do not change the message from God. Instead, we proclaim the true {message}, and we prove to everyone that God considers us trustworthy. ³In fact, the only people who do not understand the good news that we proclaim are people who are passing away. ⁴Satan, who rules the world right now, has kept these people who do not believe from understanding. That way, the good news about the glorious Messiah, who shows what God is like, does not change them. ⁵{I say that the good news is about the Messiah} because we do not tell other people about ourselves. Rather, {we tell them} about Jesus the Messiah, the Lord, and about how we serve you because of him. ⁶{We do that} because it is God who spoke these words: "What is dark will become bright." He has enabled us to understand what is true about how glorious he is, just as if he had shined a light on us. {God has revealed this} in Jesus the Messiah.

⁷We experience and proclaim these wonderful things, but we ourselves are weak and worthless. That way, {it is clear that} God causes these things to be so powerful, not we. ⁸{We experience} many {difficult things}. People persecute us, but they do not overcome us. We are not sure what to do, but we do not give up. ⁹People try to hurt

us, but God does not abandon us. People act against us, but they do not defeat us. ¹⁰We continually suffer physically, like Jesus did. That way, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. ¹¹Indeed, while we are living, God allows us to suffer continually because of Jesus. That way, even though we will die, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. ¹²As you can see, God allows us to suffer, but he will make you live.

¹³Now we are those who trust {God}, just like the person who wrote {in the psalm}, "I trusted {God}, so I spoke." We too trust {God}, so we too speak. ¹⁴{We do that because} we realize that God made Jesus alive again, so he will also make us alive again. Then we will be with Jesus and with you before God. ¹⁵We do each of those things to help you. That way, God will act graciously to more people. Then, people will thank God more, which honors God.

¹⁶Therefore, we do not give up. Instead, even though the part of us that people can see is perishing, every day God is strengthening the part of us that people cannot see. ¹⁷{We do not give up,} because when we suffer in temporary and unimportant ways, that will cause us to become glorious forever and in important ways, ways that we cannot even imagine. ¹⁸So, we pay attention to what we do not see rather than to what we see. {That is} because what we do not see will last forever, but what we see will pass away.

Chapter 5

¹Indeed, we realize that the bodies we have on this earth will die. They are like tents that people destroy. However, God will give us new bodies that will live forever. They will be like buildings that God creates in the heavenly places.

²In fact, we mourn how we live in these bodies. We want God to give us new bodies, just as if he was putting new clothes on us. {These new bodies will be like} buildings {that God gives us} from heaven. ³Whenever we receive our new bodies, they will be like clothes that keep us from being naked.

⁴Even further, while we have these bodies that are like tents, we mourn, and these bodies make living difficult. Because of that, it is not that we want to be without bodies, which would be like having no clothes. Rather, {we want} to receive new bodies, which will be like putting on new clothes. That way, we will live forever instead of expecting to die. ⁵God is the one who makes us ready for these new bodies. He gave the Holy Spirit to us, which shows that he will also give us everything else that he has promised.

⁶So then, we are confident at all times {about what God will give us}. Also, we realize that while we have these bodies, we are not with the Lord {Jesus}. ⁷Indeed, we act as we do because we trust {the Lord Jesus}, not because we see {him}. ⁸As I said, we are confident {about what God will give us}. Also, we would choose instead to be without our bodies and with the Lord {Jesus}. ⁹So then, we strive to please the Lord Jesus whether we are with him or not. ¹⁰{We do that} because all of us will have to appear before the Messiah and he will decide whether each one of us has done what is right or what is wrong. Then, he will give us what we deserve in proportion to what we did while we had these bodies.

¹¹So then, because we experience what it means to fear the Lord {Jesus}, we convince others {to fear him also}. God knows {that we are trustworthy}, and I want you also to know {that we are trustworthy}. ¹²We are not proving to you a second time that we are trustworthy. Rather, we are enabling you to say great things about us. That way, you can respond to anybody who says great things about how people appear on the outside and not about who those people really are on the inside. ¹³So, when we seem crazy, we are serving God. When we seem to think normally, we are serving you. ¹⁴{Those things are true} because the Messiah loves us, and that directs us {to act in certain ways}. Here is how we think about it: one person{, the Messiah,} died to rescue all people. Because of that, {it is as if} all people died. ¹⁵Further, {this is why} he died to rescue all people: that way, those who live spiritually will not do whatever they want anymore. Instead, {they will do} what the Messiah wants, since he died to rescue them and God made him alive again.

¹⁶Because of all that, we do not think about anyone in merely human ways any longer. Indeed, although at one time we thought about the Messiah in merely human ways, we do not think about him in those ways any longer.

¹⁷So then, whenever God unites people to the Messiah, he makes them new people. What they used to be has

disappeared. Look, what they are now is something new! ¹⁸God is the one who gives us every one of these things. By working through the Messiah, he has enabled us to be with him. Further, God empowers us to act so that others can also be with him. ¹⁹Here is how that works: God works through Christ to enable every person to be with him. In doing so, he forgives people for what they have done wrong. Further, he commissions us to tell others about how they can be with God.

²⁰Because {God has commissioned us}, we represent the Messiah. So, God encourages others through us. We speak for the Messiah when we ask you {to believe the good news so that} you can be with God. ²¹Jesus did not sin. {Despite that,} for our sake God treated him as if he had sinned. As a result, God makes us righteous by uniting us to Jesus.

Chapter 6

¹As those who serve with God, we encourage you to accept fully what God has graciously done {for you}, so that it changes {how you live}. ²{You should do that} because God says {in the scripture}:

“When I considered it to be the right time, I heard you {and acted}.

Indeed, when I was rescuing {people}, I assisted you.”

Right now is when God considers it to be the best time! Indeed, right now is when God is rescuing {people}!

³We avoid doing anything that might offend others. That way, no one can criticize how we serve {God}. ⁴Rather, we prove that we are trustworthy in every way while we serve God. We always persevere when people hurt and persecute us. ⁵{We persevere} when people strike us, put us in jail, and stir up crowds against us. {We persevere} when we work hard, do not sleep much, and go hungry. ⁶We are free from evil things, we know {what is true}, and we do not easily become angry. We care {for others}, we have the Holy Spirit, and we love {people} sincerely. ⁷We proclaim what is true, and God enables us to act powerfully. We are righteous, which is like having a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. ⁸Some people honor us, and others shame us. Some people say bad things about us, and others say good things about us. Some people think that we tell lies, but really we speak what is true. ⁹Some people think that nobody acknowledges us, but really, God acknowledges us. Some people think that we are dying, but really, we are alive! Some people think that God is punishing us, but really, he has not decided that we should die. ¹⁰Some people think that we mourn, but really, we continually rejoice. Some people think that we are needy, but really, we help many people gain what is truly valuable. Some people think that we do not have anything, but really, we have everything.

¹¹Fellow believers in the city of Corinth, we have told you what is true, and we care for you greatly. ¹²We are not the ones who have stopped {caring for you}. Rather, it is you who have stopped caring {for us}. ¹³Now I will speak to you {as if you thought in simple ways} like children {do}: since we care for you, it would only be right if you cared for us in return.

¹⁴Do not join in with people who do not trust {the Messiah}. {I say that} because what is right and what is wrong have nothing in common. Further, what is good shares nothing with what is evil. ¹⁵The Messiah does not agree {about anything} with the devil Beliar. Further, people who trust {the Messiah} do not belong with people who do not trust {the Messiah}. ¹⁶God's temple does not go together with other gods. In fact, it is as if we {who believe} were the only real God's temple. {You can tell that we are God's temple} because God spoke {these words in the Scriptures}:

“I will be with my people.

Indeed, I will not leave them.

They will consider me to be their God

and I will consider them to be my people.”

¹⁷So then, {we should do what} the Lord {God} says {in the Scriptures}:

“Get away from people {who do not serve me}.

Make sure that you are different {than them}.

Stay away from anything that defiles you.”

{He says,} “Then, I will gladly receive you.”

¹⁸Further, the Lord {God}, who rules all things, says,

“I will be your father.

You will be my sons and daughters.”

Chapter 7

¹So then, {fellow believers} whom I love, because God has promised these things to us, we should get rid of everything that defiles us on the outside and on the inside. We should become completely holy as we fear God.

²{We ask you to} care for us! We have not hurt, cheated, or destroyed anyone. ³I am not saying these things to blame you. In fact, as I have already written {in this letter}, we care for you greatly, no matter what happens. ⁴I am very confident {that} you {will do what is right}. {In fact,} I often say great things about you. You encourage me greatly, and I rejoice very much {about you} even while we are suffering.

⁵Now to return {to how I traveled}, when we arrived in Macedonia, things did not get easier for us. Instead, we suffered in many ways. Other people quarreled with us, and we ourselves were often afraid. ⁶However, God encourages people who feel discouraged. He encouraged us by having Titus join {us}. ⁷{God encouraged us} partly by having Titus join {us}, but even more by how what you did encourages Titus. He has told us that you want {to see me}, that you are sorry {for what you did}, and that you strive to honor me. Because of those things, I rejoiced more {than I did before}.

⁸I am not sorry {that I wrote the previous letter}, even though I hurt you with what I wrote. In fact, the only reason I would be sorry {that I wrote it} is that I know that the letter hurt you, although only for a little while. ⁹However, now {that Titus has told us about you,} I am very happy. {I am happy} not because I hurt you. Rather, {I am happy} because when I hurt you, you became sorry {for what you did} and stopped {doing it}. In fact, you felt hurt in a way that honors God. So, we have not deprived you of anything good. ¹⁰{That is} because, when people feel hurt in a way that honors God, it causes them to be sorry {for what they did} and stop {doing it}. They are not sorry {that they felt hurt}, because {God uses how they feel} to rescue them. However, when people feel hurt in the way that most people do, {how they feel} eventually causes them to die. ¹¹As for you, when you felt hurt in this way that honors God, it certainly caused you to be very eager {to do what is right}. You argued that you were not guilty. You were upset {about what had happened}. You feared {what might happen}. You wanted {to see us}. You strove to honor {us}. You punished {the person who had done what was wrong}. By doing all {those things}, you have shown that you have done what is right in response to what happened. ¹²So then, when I sent {the previous letter} to you, I was not primarily dealing with the person who did what was wrong. Also, I was not primarily dealing with the person whom he hurt. Rather, I intended to show you how eager you are {to act rightly} toward us and that God approves {of this}. ¹³Since you responded in these ways, you have encouraged us.

In fact, although you did encourage us, we are even more happy about how you made Titus happy. {You did that} when you all comforted and strengthened him. ¹⁴{We were this happy} because you did not disgrace me after I had said great things about you to Titus. Instead, Titus found out that the great things we said about you were actually true. {This is} just like how everything we told you was also true. ¹⁵Titus recalls how you all obeyed us,

particularly how you feared him when he arrived. {Because of that,} he cares about you even more now. ¹⁶I am happy that I am completely sure that you {are doing what is right}.

Chapter 8

¹My fellow believers, we want to tell you about what God has graciously enabled the groups of believers {here} in Macedonia province to do. ²Even though they suffered very much, which tested {how they would respond}, they were extremely generous. They were very joyful {as they did this}, even though they had very little. ³In fact, I can tell you that {they offered} as much as they could afford, and even more than they could afford. They were the ones who chose to do this. ⁴They were very insistent when they urged us to accept {what they were giving}. They wanted to share in serving God's people. ⁵Further, they did even more than what we had expected. They dedicated themselves primarily to {serving} the Lord {Jesus} and then also to {serving} us. {That is} just what God wants. ⁶Because of that, we encouraged Titus to finish accepting what you are giving, especially since he had already started {doing so}. ⁷As for you, you are already doing well in so many ways. {This includes} how you trust {God}, what you say, how much you know, how you are always eager {to do what is right}, and how much we love you. So, you should also do well in giving {money for fellow believers}.

⁸I am not ordering you {to give money}. Rather, I want to show that you really care {for fellow believers} by comparing {what you do} with how other people are always eager {to give money}. ⁹{You should be eager to give money} because you realize that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, kindly gave up everything he had to help you. {He did that even though} he had very many things. He wanted to give you many things by himself giving up what he had.

¹⁰I am telling you what I think about giving money, because hearing what I think helps you. Last year, you both wanted to and did start {giving money}. ¹¹Right now, you should finish what you started. That way, what you finish doing matches what you eagerly wanted {to do}, {which is to give some} of what you have. ¹²Now God approves of {what people give} based on what they have, not based on what they do not have. {This is true} as long as they are eager {to give}.

¹³So, it is not that I want you to suffer while other believers do well. Rather, I want {believers to share what they have} equally. ¹⁴Right now, how much you have can help people who do not have much. Then, when those people have much and you have little, they can help you. That way, believers share {what they have} equally. ¹⁵{We want it to be} like what someone wrote {when God powerfully gave food to the Israelites}:

"The people who had much did not have more than they needed.

The people who had little did not have less than they needed."

¹⁶We thank God for causing Titus to be eager {to care} for you, just like we are. ¹⁷Indeed, he is visiting you partly because he listened to us urging him {to do so}. Mostly, however, {he is visiting you} because he is so eager {to care for you} that he himself chose {to visit you}. ¹⁸We have chosen a fellow believer to go with Titus. Many groups of believers commend him {because of what he does} for the sake of the good news. ¹⁹More than that, the groups of believers selected him to travel with me. He is helping us as we work to accept {money for the believers in Jerusalem}. {Accepting this money} honors the Lord {God} and demonstrates how eager we are {to care for fellow believers}.

²⁰So, we are doing what we can to keep others from criticizing us for what we do {with this money} that people have generously given. ²¹As you can see, before {we started to collect this money}, we planned how to do it well. {We considered} what the Lord {God} thinks, but we also {considered} what other people think.

²²We have chosen another fellow believer to go with Titus and the other man {I have been speaking about}. We have tested him and know for sure that he is eager {to serve God}. In fact, because he is very confident that you {will do what is right}, right now he is particularly eager {to serve with you}. ²³{I recommend these men.} Titus joins me {in what I do} and works with me to help you. The groups of believers send the other two fellow believers, and

they honor the Messiah. ²⁴So then, show these three men and also the groups of believers that you really do care {for fellow believers} and that the great things we say about you really are true.

Chapter 9

¹Really, though, I do not need to say anything to you about how we are serving God's people {in Jerusalem}. ²{That is} because I recognize how eager you are {to give}. In fact, I say great things about you to the believers in Macedonia province. {I tell them} that you believers in Achaia province were already preparing {to give} last year. How eager you were {to give} has encouraged most of them {to give also}. ³However, {although we know that you are eager}, we have chosen these {three} fellow believers to visit you to make sure that the great things we say about how you are eager {to give} prove true. {They are visiting you} so that you can finish preparing {to give} and in this way match what I have told {the Macedonians about you}. ⁴On the other hand, {think about what would happen} were some believers from Macedonia province to visit you with me and discover that you had not finished preparing {to give}. How you had acted would shame even us, and {it would} most definitely {shame} you. ⁵Because of that, I decided that I needed to ask these {three} fellow believers to visit you before {I do} and help you with what you said you would give. That way, you will have already prepared what you are giving, and {you will offer it} because you want to and not because we are making you do it.

⁶Here is an example {that illustrates how you should give}. When farmers plant only a few seeds, they harvest only a little food. When farmers plant many seeds, they harvest much food. Much like that, when you help other people, someone will help you in return. ⁷Each of you should choose for yourself {how much to give}. Do not {choose how much to give} because you feel hurt or because you have to. {I say that} because God cares for people who give gladly. ⁸God can graciously give you more than you need. That way, because you always have everything you need in every situation, you can always do everything that is right. ⁹{You can tell that is true} because someone wrote {about this kind of person} in the Scriptures,

"They give to many people.

Yes, they help those who have very little.

They will do what is right forever."

¹⁰God provides the seeds for the one who plants them, and {he provides} food for people to eat. So, he will also provide what you need and give you more of it. Further, when you do what is right, he will use that to accomplish good things. ¹¹God consistently gives you more than you need so that you can always generously {give to others}. When you give generously and we send your gifts {to fellow believers}, they thank God.

¹²In fact, when you serve God's people {in Jerusalem} by giving {to them}, it provides what they need. Even more, though, it causes them to thank God very much. ¹³You prove yourselves by serving God's people {in Jerusalem}. So then, they will honor God because you actually do what the good news about the Messiah requires, {which is the same good news} that you say you believe. {They will honor God} also because you generously share {what you have} with them and with all {believers}. ¹⁴Further, they will want {to see} you as they pray for you, since you give very graciously as God enables you to. ¹⁵We thank God for giving us these things that are more wonderful than we can say!

Chapter 10

¹Now I {will speak about} myself, Paul. I am humbly and reasonably urging you {to do what is right}, just like the Messiah {was humble and reasonable}. {Some people say that} when I was with you in person, I was gentle with you, but now, when I am away, I am forceful with you. ²I do intend to be forceful when I boldly act against these people who think that I and those {who serve} with me act in merely human ways. So, I ask you {to do what is right} so that I will not need to be forceful with you too when I visit you. ³In fact, although we act as humans, we do

not defend ourselves in merely human ways. ⁴In fact, what we use to defend ourselves is not what humans normally use. Rather, God empowers {what we use to defend ourselves} so that we can defeat what other people powerfully argue. ⁵{We} also {defeat} anything that people claim is greater than knowing God. Further, we work to influence everything that people think so that they obey the Messiah. ⁶At the time when you fully obey {the Messiah}, we will be ready to punish anyone who disobeys {him}.

⁷Think about what is obvious. Suppose that people are sure that they represent the Messiah. Those people need to remember that we too represent the Messiah, just like they do. ⁸Indeed, I do not disgrace myself when I say many great things about how the Lord {Jesus} has empowered us to represent him. {He did that} so that we could encourage and help you {to trust God more}, not so that we could discourage you {from trusting God}. ⁹So, {you can tell that} I am not trying to scare you when I send {forceful} letters to you. ¹⁰{I write that} because some people say {about me}, "He sends severe and powerful letters to us, but he is feeble and speaks very poorly when he is with us." ¹¹People who say those things need to realize that what we write in our letters {to you} when we are not with you is also how we act when we are with you.

¹²We are too humble to say that we are as good as people {you know} who say that they are trustworthy. Those people are foolish. {When they say that they are great,} they are looking only at themselves. ¹³In contrast, we do not say great things about ourselves beyond what we actually do. Rather, {we say great things about ourselves} that match with what God has given us to do. That includes what we do whenever we are with you. ¹⁴In fact, only if we had not actually visited you would {what God has given us to do} not include you. Of course, we really have already visited you {and told you} the good news about the Messiah.

¹⁵We do not say great things about ourselves because of what others do but because of what we actually do. In fact, we confidently expect that God will give us even more to do with you. {That will happen} when you trust {God} more. ¹⁶That way, we can tell the good news to people who live even further away from us than you do. {That is what we plan to do} instead of saying great things about ourselves because of how other people have done what God has given them to do. ¹⁷{Everyone should do what the prophet Jeremiah wrote,}

"Anyone who says great things should say them about the Lord {God}."

¹⁸{Everyone should do that} because the Lord {Jesus} recommends those whom he says are trustworthy, not those who say that about themselves.

Chapter 11

¹{Next,} I hope that you will be patient with me as I say a few things {that I consider} foolish. I know that you are patient with me! ²{I will say foolish things} because I am protective of you as God is protective of you. In fact, when I told you the good news, I was like a father who promised to give you to a man as his wife. Just like this father wants his daughter to be with only this one man, so I want you to trust only in the Messiah. ³However, I fear that someone {will trick you}, just as Satan cleverly tricked Eve{, the first woman}. {I fear that such a person} will ruin how you think in ways that are completely loyal to the Messiah. ⁴{I fear for you} because {I know that} people visit you and tell you about Jesus, but it is not the same Jesus we told you about. Others offer you a spirit, but it is not the Holy Spirit that we offered to you. Others proclaim good news to you, but it is not the same good news that you first believed. Despite that, you are very patient {when people tell you about these things}.

⁵{I want you to believe what we first told you} because I think that the Messiah acts through me as much as through those who say that they represent him the best. ⁶Although I have not learned how to speak very well, despite that, {I have learned} to know {what is true}. I show you that this is true whenever I say or do anything.

⁷You know that I did not sin against you when I did not ask you to pay me for proclaiming to you the good news from God. {By doing that,} I made myself less important to make you more important. ⁸{In fact,} I received money from other groups of believers. I accepted their money so that I could serve you. ⁹Further, when I was with you, I

did not have everything that I needed. However, I did not bother any of you {by asking for money}. {I could do that} because our fellow believers who traveled {with me} from Macedonia province gave me everything that I needed. Indeed, in every situation, I did not and never will bother you {by asking for money for myself}. ¹⁰No one who lives in any part of Achaia province will be able to keep me from saying great things {about how I did not bother you}. What I am saying is as true as if the Messiah were saying it. ¹¹My reason for {not bothering you} is not that I do not care for you. God can testify {that I do care for you}.

¹²Rather, {here is my reason for why} I will continue not to bother you. That way, I can prevent anyone from being able to say such great things about themselves as we {say about ourselves}. {I know that} some people want to do this. ¹³Those people are not really those whom the Messiah sent to represent him. They deceive people with what they do, and they can only pretend to represent the Messiah. ¹⁴That should not surprise us. The devil also pretends to be a glorious spiritual being. ¹⁵So then, we should expect those who serve him also to pretend to help people become righteous. God will eventually give them what they deserve in proportion to what they have done.

¹⁶I repeat what I said earlier: I do not want anyone to think that I am foolish. However, if you do {think that I am foolish}, you should at least allow me to act in foolish ways. That way, I too can say a few great things about myself. ¹⁷What I am about to say is not how I speak when I am representing the Lord {Jesus}. Rather, I am about to speak foolishly as I prove that I can say great things about myself. ¹⁸Many other people say great things about themselves in merely human ways. So, I too will say great things about myself. ¹⁹{I know that you will listen to me,} because you consider yourselves to be wise people, so you are happy to be patient with other people who act foolishly. ²⁰In fact, you are patient {when people treat you badly}. They may force you to obey them. They may use up what you have. They may cheat you. They may say they are better than you. They may insult you. {However, you are still patient with them.} ²¹{If that is the right way for powerful people to treat you, then} I admit {that how we acted when we were with you} shames us and proves that we are weak. On the other hand, whatever other people dare to do, I too can dare to do. Of course, I say these things only because I am acting foolishly. ²²Those people say they are Jews who speak Hebrew, but I also {am a Jew and speak Hebrew}. They say they are Israelites, but I also {am an Israelite}. They say they are descendants of Abraham, but I also {am a descendant of Abraham}. ²³They say they serve the Messiah, but I {serve the Messiah} even more. {Of course,} I am talking like a crazy person. {However,} I have worked harder {than they have}. People have put me in jail more {than them}. People have struck me very many times. I have almost died many times. ²⁴Five different times Jewish leaders had someone strike me {the maximum number of times:} 39. ²⁵Three different times leaders had someone repeatedly hit me with a stick. One time people threw stones at me {to kill me}. Three different times the ship {I was sailing in} sank. I have survived for 24 hours in the middle of the ocean. ²⁶I travel frequently. I go through dangerous places, including rivers, towns, deserts, and oceans. There are always people who could hurt me, including thieves, Jewish people, non-Jewish people, and people who pretend to be fellow believers. ²⁷I work very hard. I frequently do not sleep much. I do not have enough to eat or drink. I frequently go hungry. I sometimes freeze and do not have enough clothing. ²⁸Besides everything else {that I could mention}, I anxiously think daily about all the groups of believers. ²⁹When a fellow believer is feeble, I am feeble. When someone causes a fellow believer to sin, I become very angry.

³⁰Since I need to say great things about myself, I intend to say great things about how feeble I am. ³¹We all will forever honor the God and Father of the Lord Jesus. He can testify that what I am saying is true.

³²When I was in Damascus city, the local ruler who served King Aretas had soldiers looking for me in the city to capture me. ³³However, fellow believers helped me get away from the local ruler. {They put me} in a large basket, {attached it to a rope, and} let it down through an opening in the city wall.

Chapter 12

¹I need to say great things about myself. {So,} although it is not helpful, I am moving on to {speak about} how the Lord {Jesus} specially shows things {to specific people}. ²Fourteen years ago, God took a certain Christian to the third {level of} heaven. I am not sure whether {God took him there} physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God

can be sure {how it happened}. ³Now {I will tell you more about} that specific Christian. {Again,} I am not sure whether {God took him to the third level of heaven} physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God can be sure {how it happened}. ⁴God took that person into Paradise{, the place in heaven where dead believers are}. There, he heard amazing things that he cannot repeat to anyone. ⁵I could say great things about that{, since the person I have been talking about is me}. However, I will only say great things about how feeble I am. ⁶In fact, suppose that I did want to say great things about myself. Since I am speaking truthfully, I would still not be acting foolishly. However, I decide not to {say great things about myself}. {That way,} people can only characterize me by what they observe me saying and doing. ⁷So then, in order that I might not become proud because God revealed such great things to me, he allowed me to suffer. Specifically, a spiritual being whom Satan sent made me suffer. That way, I might not become proud. ⁸I asked the Lord {Jesus} three different times to make me stop suffering in that way. ⁹He responded by saying to me, "When I act kindly to you, that is all you need. In fact, I make people fully powerful when they are feeble." Therefore, I will most happily say more great things about how feeble I am. That way, the Messiah will always enable me to act powerfully. ¹⁰So then, I am happy {when bad things happen to me} because {I serve} the Messiah. This includes when I am feeble, when people say bad things about me, when people hurt me, when people persecute me, and when I struggle. {I am happy} because {God} empowers me when I am feeble.

¹¹I have been speaking foolishly, which is what you forced me to do. {You forced me} because you should be saying that I am trustworthy, {but you are not saying that}. {You should be saying that} because I am just as great as any people who say that they represent the Messiah the best. {That is true} even though I am not great at all. ¹²I persevered in acting in the ways that prove to you that I really am one whom the Messiah sent to represent him. I did powerful and amazing things. ¹³Further, I did not treat you like you were less important than any other group of believers. The only way {I acted differently with you} was that I did not bother you {by asking you for money}. If that was actually wrong, please forgive me for doing it!

¹⁴Pay attention! I am about to visit you for the third time. Yet again, I will not bother you {by asking for money}. {That is} because I want you {to trust me and the Messiah}. {I do not want} the things that you have. In fact, since I am like your parent, I should be saving money for you. Further, since you are like my children, you should not be saving money for me. ¹⁵I will most happily do and experience anything to help you. When I love you more {than I did before}, you should not love me less {than you did before}.

¹⁶You can agree, then, that I personally did not bother you {by asking for money}. However, perhaps I am a clever person. {Maybe} I somehow tricked you into giving me {money}. ¹⁷{However,} I have not had anyone visit you who has acted for me by cheating you. ¹⁸{For example,} I asked Titus {to visit you}, and I had a fellow believer go with him. {You know that} Titus did not cheat you. He and I live the same way and do the same things.

¹⁹You should know that the reason why we have said these things is not to explain to you that I and those who serve with me are trustworthy. Rather, as those whom God has united to the Messiah, we have been saying what pleases God. Of course, {fellow believers} whom we love, we intend everything we say and do to help you grow. ²⁰{I have said these things} because I am concerned about {what will happen} when I visit. {I am concerned that} I will discover that you are not acting as I want {you to act} and that you will discover that I am not acting as you want {me to act}. {I am concerned} that you may be fighting {with each other}, being jealous {of each other}, being angry {with each other}, trying to control {each other}, saying bad things {about each other}, telling false stories {about others}, saying great things about yourselves, or stirring up crowds {against each other}. ²¹{I am concerned} about {what will happen} when I visit you this third time. God may make me ashamed about you. Further, I may feel very sad about many people who have previously done what is wrong and have not stopped having improper sex.

Chapter 13

¹{The scripture says;} "At least two or three witnesses must say the same thing {about someone} before we can believe that it is true." {Be aware that} the next time that I visit you will be the third time {that I will be a witness to what you are doing}. ²When I visited you the second time, I warned all of you that I was going to punish everyone

among you who had been sinning. And now I am warning you again while I am still away from you. When I visit you this third time, I will punish everyone who has been sinning. ³I tell you this because you have demanded that I prove to you that the Messiah is speaking to you when I speak to you. {You will know this when he disciplines you.} He will not be weak with you; instead, he will work powerfully among you. ⁴You see, {as a man,} the Messiah allowed himself to be weak when people nailed him to a cross. But God is powerful, and he has made him alive again. We, too, are weak human beings, as he was. But God also works powerfully in us to make us live as the Messiah does, so we will work powerfully among you.

⁵Each of you should ask yourself: "Do I trust the Messiah and live as he directs me?" Each of you should test yourself {in this way}. Then you will know that you truly live as one with Jesus the Messiah. That is true unless, of course, you fail this test. ⁶As for us, I am certain that you will understand that we have passed the test. ⁷We pray to God that you may not be doing any bad things. We pray for this, not because we want people to consider that we have been successful {in disciplining you}, but so that you would be doing good things. We want this for you even if it means that people consider that we have failed {because you did not need us}. ⁸We want you to do good things {even if then we cannot discipline you and appear to be powerful} because we must obey God's true message. We cannot do anything that contradicts God's true message. ⁹We are happy when {people think that} we are weak, because you are strong {in obeying God} {without needing discipline from us}. This is the very thing that we pray for, that you may decide to trust and obey God completely. ¹⁰It is because I want you to trust and obey God completely that I am writing to you about these things while I am apart from you. Then when I come to you, I will not have to discipline you severely. The Lord has empowered me to represent him, but he did that so that I could encourage and help you {to trust God more}, not so that I could discourage you {from trusting God}.

¹¹Here are the last things that I want to say to you, my fellow believers. Be joyful! Live in the way that God wants you to live. Let the things that I have said to you encourage you {to trust God more}. Agree with each other {about the important things}. Live peacefully with each other. {If you do these things,} God will be with you. He is the one who enables you to love and to be peaceful with others. ¹²Greet each other affectionately in a way that is appropriate for those who are members of God's family. All of God's people {here} send greetings to you. ¹³May the Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you and join you all together.

Galatians

Chapter 1

¹I, Paul, write this letter to you. {I remind you that} God sent me to represent him. That is not because a group of people appointed me, nor because a human being sent me to be an apostle. Instead, I am an apostle because Jesus the Messiah and God the Father have appointed and sent me to be an apostle—yes, God the Father, who made the Messiah alive again after he died! ²All the fellow believers who are here with me {approve of this message that I am writing}. I am sending this letter to the congregations that are in the province of Galatia. ³{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.” ⁴The Messiah offered himself as a sacrifice in order that he might remove the guilt for the sinful things we have done. He did that in order that he might enable us to not do the evil things that people who do not know him do. He did this because God, who is our Father, wanted it. ⁵{Because that is true,} let us praise God forever and ever. May it be so!

⁶I am very disappointed that so soon after you trusted in the Messiah you are turning away from God. God chose you to be in a relationship that is based on the kindness of the Messiah. I am also disappointed that so soon you are believing a different message which some say is “good news.” ⁷Their message is not a true message. What is happening is that certain persons are confusing your minds. They are desiring to change the good news about the Messiah and are creating another message. ⁸But even if we apostles or an angel from heaven would tell you a message that is different from the good news that we told you before, I appeal to God that he would punish such a person forever. ⁹As we told you previously, so now I tell you this once more: Someone is telling you what he says is good news, but it is a message that is different from the good news that I gave you. So I appeal to God that he eternally condemn that person. ¹⁰I said that because I do not desire that people approve me, contrary to what some people have said about me. It is God whom I desire to approve me. Specifically, I do not say and do things just to please people. If it were still people whom I was trying to please, then I would not be one who willingly and completely serves the Messiah.

¹¹My fellow believers, I want you to know that the message about the Messiah that I proclaim to people is not one that some person created. ¹²I was not given this good news by a human being, and no human being taught it to me. Instead, it was God who revealed Jesus the Messiah to me.

¹³People have told you how I used to behave when I practiced the Jewish religion. They told you that I continually did very harmful things to the groups of believers belonging to God, and they told you that I tried to get rid of those people. ¹⁴I was practicing the Jewish religion more thoroughly than many other Jews who were my age were practicing it. I was also trying much more enthusiastically to get others to obey the traditions that my ancestors kept. ¹⁵Nevertheless, before I was born God selected me for a special task and he kindly chose me. When God thought that it was good, ¹⁶he showed me who his Son really is. He did this so that I would tell others the good news about his Son in regions where the non-Jews live. But I did not immediately go to any human beings in order to gain an understanding of that message. ¹⁷I also did not immediately leave Damascus and go to Jerusalem {for that purpose} to those who were representatives of Jesus before I was. Rather, I went away into the region of Arabia{, a desert area}. Later I returned once more to the city of Damascus. ¹⁸Then three years after {God revealed this good news to me,} I went up to the city of Jerusalem in order that I might meet Peter. {But} I remained with him for {only} fifteen days. ¹⁹I also saw James, the brother and representative of our Lord Jesus, but I did not see any other representatives of Jesus. ²⁰God knows that what I am writing to you is completely true! ²¹After I left Jerusalem, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²At that time people in the Christian congregations who were in the province of Judea still had not met me personally ²³They only heard others say about me repeatedly, “Paul, the one who in the past was doing harmful things to us, is now telling the same message which we believe

and which formerly he was trying to cause people to stop believing!" ²⁴So they kept praising God because he had caused me to believe in Jesus and because I was now telling people the good news about him.

Chapter 2

¹After fourteen years passed, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas. I also took Titus. ²I went up there because of what God revealed to me. {It was not because someone asked me to come.} I told people the content of the good news that I preach to non-Jews. But I spoke privately to those whom your new teachers highly respect so that what I was doing and what I had done might not become useless. That could have happened if people rejected my message because they thought that I was teaching falsely, which could have happened if the leaders in Jerusalem would have disagreed with my message. ³But those leaders did not even require Titus, who was with me and was an uncircumcised Gentile, to be circumcised. ⁴But this problem occurred because {some people demanded that Titus be circumcised} after they had successfully pretended that they were fellow believers and associated with the true believers. They associated with the true believers in order that they might observe closely what we do because we are free from having to obey all the Jewish laws and rituals because of our close relationship with the Messiah Jesus. Those people wanted to make us like slaves of those rituals {by convincing us that we cannot trust the Messiah solely but that we must also obey all the Jewish laws and rituals}. ⁵But not even briefly did we do what they wanted regarding circumcision. We resisted them in order that you might continue to have, and benefit from, the true, correct, and unmodified good news. ⁶The leaders in Jerusalem, whom your new teachers respect, did not add anything to what I proclaim. And I would add that what status those leaders had did not influence me, because God does not favor important and powerful persons more than others. ⁷Instead {of those leaders adding to the content of the message that I tell people,} they understood that God had given me the good news so that I might proclaim it to the non-Jews, just like God had given the good news to Peter so that he might tell it to those who are Jews. ⁸That is, just like God had authorized and empowered Peter in order that he might be a representative of Jesus to take God's message to the Jews, he also had authorized and empowered me in order that I might be a representative of Jesus to take God's message to the non-Jews. ⁹Those leaders knew that God had kindly given to me this special mission. So James, Peter, and John, the ones whom your new teachers respect because they are leaders of the believers, shook hands with us to show that they agreed that Barnabas and I are serving the Lord just like they are, and that we are preaching the same message that they are preaching. They also agreed that we are the ones whom God was sending to tell his message to non-Jews, but that God is sending them to tell his message to Jews. ¹⁰They only urged us to still remember to help the poor among the fellow believers who live in Jerusalem. That is exactly what I have been eager to do.

¹¹But later, Peter became guilty of doing wrong things. This happened while he was visiting us in the city of Antioch. So I confronted him directly about those things. ¹²This is what happened: Peter had been eating with the non-Jewish believers there. But then some men came who were from {the group of Jewish believers in Jerusalem that} James {was leading}. These men said that believers should keep the Jewish laws. Peter was afraid of what people who want Jewish believers to keep the Jewish laws might do, and so he began to withdraw from the non-Jews and eat with only the Jewish believers. ¹³Also, the other Jewish believers who were in Antioch acted in a way that they knew was not right, along with Peter{, when they separated themselves from the non-Jewish believers}. The result was that {they convinced} even Barnabas to stop associating with the non-Jewish believers! ¹⁴I had realized that they were not acting forthrightly and in a manner that was consistent with the correct facts and teachings of the good news about the Messiah. {So when all the fellow believers had come together,} I told Peter {the following:} "Although you are a Jew, you often conduct yourself like non-Jews do by disregarding Jewish laws about food. When you are among non-Jews, you do not customarily conduct yourself at all like Jews do. So, now it is wrong that you are causing non-Jews to think that they must obey all the Jewish rituals and customs! ¹⁵We were born as Jews. {We were} not {born} as non-Jews. We Jews have always considered non-Jews to be sinners because they do not obey the Jewish rituals and laws. ¹⁶But we Jewish believers now know that it is not because some person obeys those things {that God commanded} in the laws {he gave the Jews} that God makes a person righteous. {God makes a person righteous} only if that person trusts in the Messiah Jesus. So even we Jews have trusted the Messiah Jesus. {We did that} so God would declare us good in his sight, because we trust the Messiah, and not because we try to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. We did that because God has said that he will not

declare anyone good in his sight just because they obey those laws. ¹⁷Furthermore, because we {Jewish believers} desired that God would make us righteous because of our relationship with the Messiah, it means that we ourselves, like non-Jews {whom we called sinners,} also disobeyed the laws and rituals that God gave Moses. But we certainly cannot conclude that it is the Messiah who causes us to sin. No, the Messiah certainly does not cause anyone to sin.

¹⁸If I again believed that God would make me righteous because of my obeying the laws that he gave to Moses, I would be like a man who rebuilds an old building that he had torn down. If I did that I would show that I was guilty of acting wrongly. ¹⁹I realized that God would not regard me as righteous because I tried to obey the laws that he gave to Moses. So I have decided not to respond to what those laws demand, just like a dead person does not respond to anything. {I decided to do this} so that I may now live to serve God. It is as though I was with the Messiah when he died on the cross. ²⁰My old way of living ended since I began believing in the Messiah. No longer am I directing the way I behave as I did before {I believed in the Messiah}. Now the Messiah is directing how I behave. And whatever I do now while I live in my earthly body, I do it by trusting in God's Son. He is the one who loved me and offered himself as a sacrifice for me. ²¹I am not rejecting as useless what God kindly did for me{, as my opponents are doing}. If God considers people to be righteous because they obey the laws that he gave to Moses, then the Messiah died needlessly!"

Chapter 3

¹You {fellow believers} who live in Galatia are acting mindlessly! Someone must have put an evil spell on you! I clearly explained to you what Jesus the Messiah accomplished when he died on the cross. ²{So,} I want to tell you this one thing: God did not give you his Holy Spirit because you obeyed the laws that he gave Moses. Surely you must know that the reason he gave you his Holy Spirit is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah you believed it. ³You are acting very foolishly! You first became Christians because God's Spirit enabled you. So, you should not now think that it is because of what you do by obeying the laws God gave Moses that you will continue to grow spiritually. ⁴{Keep in mind that if} what God has done for you {was because of your obeying the laws that God gave to Moses and not because of trusting in the Messiah then} you suffered many things needlessly! I certainly hope that you did not suffer like that needlessly. ⁵So then, when God now generously gives to you his Spirit and performs mighty deeds among you, it is not because you obey the laws that God gave to Moses? Surely you know it is because when you heard the good news about the Messiah you believed it!

⁶{What you have experienced is} just as {Moses had written in the scriptures about Abraham. He wrote that} Abraham trusted God, and {as a result,} God considered Abraham as being righteous. ⁷You must realize, therefore, that it is those who trust in what the Messiah has done who are like Abraham's descendants {because they trust in God as Abraham did}. ⁸Furthermore, God planned beforehand that it was when non-Jews trusted him that he would consider them righteous. Moses wrote in the Scriptures this good message that God told Abraham: "Through you, I will bless people in all nations." ⁹So, we can conclude that it is those who trust in what the Messiah has done whom God blesses along with Abraham, the one who trusted him {long ago}. ¹⁰That is, God will eternally punish all those who mistakenly think that God will consider them righteous as a result of their trying to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. What Moses wrote in the Scriptures is that God will eternally punish everyone who does not continuously and completely obey all the laws that God instructed him to write in the Book of the Law. ¹¹God does not regard any person as righteous as a result of their trying to obey the laws that he gave to Moses. This is evident since {the Scriptures say}, "Every righteous person lives {spiritually} as a result of their trusting {God}." ¹²But when God gave his laws to the Jews, he did not make them dependent upon a person believing in him. Instead {God said that} it is those who obey {all} God's laws, continuously and completely, who will live through obeying them.

¹³Even though we humans have not continuously and completely obeyed God's laws, the Messiah rescued us from God punishing us eternally. The Messiah rescued us by his being the one God condemned instead of God condemning us. What Moses wrote in the Scriptures shows that this is true. He wrote, "God has cursed anyone whom people have executed {for his crimes} by hanging his body on a tree." ¹⁴{The Messiah rescued us} in order

that as a result of what he has done, God might bless the non-Jews, in a way similar to the way God blessed Abraham. The reason for this is that as a result of our trusting in the Messiah, we all might receive the Holy Spirit whom God promised to give to us.

¹⁵My fellow believers, I will now illustrate by referring to human relationships. After two people have signed an agreement, no one can reject it or add to it. ¹⁶God declared to Abraham and his descendant that he was promising to give blessings to Abraham. The words that God spoke were not "and your descendants." He was not referring to many persons. Instead, he was referring to one person, who is the Messiah, because the words that God spoke were, "and your descendant." ¹⁷This is what I am saying: God established an agreement with Abraham that the laws which he gave to the Jews 430 years later could not cancel. ¹⁸I want you to know that if it is because we obey the laws God gave to the Jews that he gives to us what he has promised to give to us, then he would not be giving it because he had promised to do so. However, God kindly gave to Abraham what he had promised to give to him, just because God had promised that he would give it to him. {Similarly,} it is not because we obey God's laws that God kindly gives to us what he has promised to give to us.

¹⁹So, if someone should ask, "Why did God later give his laws to Moses?" I would reply that it was in order that people might realize how sinful they were. Those laws were valid until Jesus came. He was the descendant that God was referring to when he made the promises to Abraham. God gave his laws to Moses by God's causing angels to speak to him. Moses was the mediator, the one who told the laws to the people. ²⁰Now, when a mediator functions, one person is not speaking with another directly; but God himself made his promises directly to Abraham.

²¹If someone should ask, "When God gave his laws to Moses long after he told Abraham what he was promising to give to him, was he changing his mind?" {I would reply that} God certainly did not change his mind when he did that! If God had given a law that could enable people to live {eternally and spiritually}, then it certainly would be because of people obeying that law that God would consider people righteous. ²²But, {in fact, it is impossible for the law to enable people to live eternally or spiritually.} Instead, the law given in the Scriptures caused all people to be unable to escape being punished for their sins, just like people in prison are unable to escape. {God did that} in order that he might give what he promised to those who trust Jesus Christ, just because they trust him. ²³Before God revealed the good news about trusting in the Messiah, the laws that God gave to Moses were confining us, as a prisoner in jail is confined. This happened until the time we might believe the good news concerning the Messiah, the good news that God was about to reveal {and now has}. ²⁴Like a father supervises his immature child by appointing a servant to take care of that child, God was supervising us by his laws until the Messiah {came}. {He did this} in order that he might now declare us righteous in his sight {only} because we trust in the Messiah. ²⁵But now that God has revealed the message about trusting in the Messiah, the laws that God gave to Moses no longer supervise us.

²⁶Now all of you {Jews and non-Jews} are {as though you are} God's children because you trust in the Messiah Jesus. You are {now} in close spiritual union with the Messiah Jesus {because you believe in Him}. ²⁷That is, you who {began a relationship with the Messiah when you} were baptized identified yourselves with Christ. ²⁸If you believe in the Messiah, it does not matter to God if you are Jews or non-Jews; slaves or ones who are not slaves; males or females, because all of you are as one sort of person because of your relationship with the Messiah Jesus. ²⁹Furthermore, since you belong to the Messiah, you are {like} Abraham's descendants because you trust God as Abraham did, and you will possess what God promised Abraham.

Chapter 4

¹Now, I will further discuss children and heirs. An heir is a person who will later possess and control all that his father has. But as long as that heir is a child, others control him, with the result that he is just like a slave. ²Until the day that his father has {previously} determined, other persons supervise the child and manage his property.

³Likewise, when we were spiritually immature {because we did not yet believe in the Messiah}, we submitted to the rules that everyone in this world lives by. Those rules controlled us like masters control their slaves. ⁴But exactly at the time that God had previously determined, he sent Jesus his Son, into the world. {Jesus was} born to a human

mother, and he had to obey the laws that God gave to Moses. ⁵God sent Jesus to rescue us who had to obey God's laws he gave to Moses from being condemned for not obeying these laws. God did this so that we might all receive from him the status of being his children. ⁶Furthermore, God sent the Spirit to live in our inner beings because we are now in such a close relationship with God it is as though we are his children. It is his Spirit who enables us to fervently call out {to God}, "Father, Father!" ⁷So, because of what God has done, no longer is each of you like a slave. Instead, each of you is like a child of God. Furthermore, since each of you is now like God's child, God has also made each of you his heir, one to whom he will give all that he has promised.

⁸When you did not have a relationship with God, you served gods that really did not exist. You were like slaves at that time, because you were in spiritual bondage. ⁹But now you have come to intimately know God. Perhaps it would be better to say that now God intimately knows each of you. So now you are acting foolishly! You are again believing that by obeying rules and rites you will benefit spiritually! Those rules are ineffective and inadequate! You are wanting to obey them again like slaves obey their masters. ¹⁰You non-Jews are carefully practicing Jewish rules and rituals regarding what you should do on Jewish special days and at special times in certain months, seasons, and years. ¹¹I am concerned about your mistaken ideas! I do not want to have so strenuously served you in vain. ¹²My fellow believers, I strongly urge you that you do as I do. {Stop thinking that you have to obey the Jewish rules and ceremonial laws prescribed by the law of Moses.} When I was with you, I did not obey all the Jewish rules and ceremonial laws, just like you did not obey them. At that time you treated me entirely as you should have.

¹³You remember that I originally told you the good news because I was physically weak {and was recovering}. Because of the opportunity which that sickness provided I was able to tell you the good news. ¹⁴Although you might have treated me contemptuously because of my physical malady, you did not treat me contemptuously or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me like you would welcome an angel that came from God. You welcomed me like you would welcome the Messiah Jesus himself! ¹⁵I am disappointed that you have forgotten that then you declared that you were pleased with me. I know for certain that you would have done anything to help me. ¹⁶So I am very disappointed that you now act as though I have become hostile to you because I have kept speaking the true message about the Messiah to you. ¹⁷Those who are insisting on obeying the Jewish laws are eagerly showing interest in you, but they are not doing this because they have good motives. They are doing this because they want you not to associate with me and others who teach what is true about the Messiah. They desire that instead of you associating with us, you will eagerly show interest in them, not in us. ¹⁸But, it is an honorable thing to eagerly desire to do the right things at all times. I would like you to eagerly desire to do the right things, both when I am with you and when I am absent. ¹⁹You who are like my children, once again I am very concerned about you, and I will continue to be concerned about you until you become like the Messiah in your thinking and in your conduct. ²⁰But I do wish that I could be with you now and that I might talk more gently with you, because right now I do not know what to do about you.

²¹Some of you desire to obey all the laws that God gave Moses. I say that you should consider the implications of what Moses wrote in the Scriptures. ²²He wrote that Abraham became the father of two sons. His female slave, Hagar, bore one son, and his wife Sarah, who was not a slave, bore the other. ²³Also, the sons differed. Ishmael, the son born by Hagar, the female slave, was conceived naturally. But Isaac, the son born by Sarah, his wife who was not a slave, was conceived miraculously because God intervened in order to fulfill what he had promised Abraham. ²⁴I am telling you this as an illustration. These two women symbolize two agreements. God made the first agreement, which involved obeying the laws that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai. Because that agreement forces those who accept it to keep obeying all its rules, it is like a slave mother who gives birth to slaves. So Hagar, the female slave, symbolizes this agreement. ²⁵Also Hagar symbolizes the agreement, with its laws and rituals, that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, in the land of Arabia. Hagar also symbolizes the Jewish religion. The Jewish religion is like a slave mother, and those who practice the Jewish religion are like slave children because they all must obey the laws that God gave to Moses. ²⁶But there is a heavenly Jerusalem, and because we belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, it is like a mother to all of us {who believe in the Messiah}. Those who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem are free from having to obey the laws of Moses and free from being condemned for failing to obey those laws. ²⁷Our new city will have more people than those who live in Jerusalem now. It will be just like Isaiah foretold {about the people whom he expected would come back to Jerusalem from exile}. {He expected that they would be more numerous than those who were taken into exile.} He wrote: You who live in Jerusalem, you will rejoice! Now

you have no children, like a barren woman who does not give birth to children! But some day you will shout joyfully, as loudly as you can, even though now you are few in number, like a woman who cannot give birth to children, and you feel deserted. You will be very happy because you will have many children who will come to you. Those children will be more than the children any woman with a husband could have borne. ²⁸Now, my fellow believers, you have become children of God because God has fulfilled what he promised to Abraham. You are like Isaac, who was born because God fulfilled what he promised to give Abraham. ²⁹Also, long ago Abraham's son Ishmael, the one who was conceived naturally, caused trouble for Abraham's son Isaac, who was conceived supernaturally. Similarly, now those who think that we must obey the laws that God gave to Moses in order that God will save us are causing trouble for those who are trusting Abraham's descendant, the Messiah. ³⁰But Moses wrote these words in a scripture passage in Genesis: "The son of the woman who was not a slave will inherit what his father owns. The female slave's son will certainly not inherit those things. So send away from this place the female slave and her son!" ³¹My fellow believers, Hagar symbolizes the laws that God gave to Moses. But we are not those who must obey all the laws that God gave to Moses. So we are not the female slave Hagar's spiritual descendants. But Sarah's descendants are those who were born as a result of God fulfilling what he promised to Abraham. So we are the spiritual descendants of Sarah, the woman who was not a slave.

Chapter 5

¹The Messiah freed us {believers} {from having to obey the laws God gave the Jews} in order that we would not have to obey {them}. So continue to be steadfastly committed {to the Lord}. Do not let anyone force you to obey {those laws} again as if you were slaves {to those laws}. ²I am Paul. Pay attention to what I am telling you! If you let anyone circumcise you, what the Messiah has done for you will not help you at all! ³Once again I solemnly declare to every man who has someone circumcise him, that he must obey all of the laws {God gave the Jews} {in order to be righteous}. ⁴You who are trying to make yourselves righteous by {obeying} the laws {God gave the Jews} have separated yourselves from the Messiah. God will no longer act kindly toward you. ⁵{This is so} because we {believers} are confidently expecting by trusting {in Jesus} that God will make us righteous. The Holy Spirit enables us {to do this}. ⁶{This is so} because {when} God has united {us} with the Messiah Jesus, whether people are circumcised or not is not important. Rather, only whether we trust {in the Messiah} is important. We show we trust {in the Messiah} by loving others.

⁷You were spiritually progressing so well! You should never have let someone stop you {from progressing}, so that what is true does not convince you! ⁸God is the one who calls you. He is not the one who is persuading you {to think like this}! ⁹{This false teaching might deceive all of you, just like} a little yeast {in some dough} makes all of it swell up. ¹⁰Because God has united {us} with the Lord {Jesus}, I am certain that you will believe only {what I have told you}. By contrast, God will certainly punish everyone who is confusing you {about these things}, whoever they are. ¹¹Fellow believers, as for me, were I to still declare that men must have someone circumcise them {in order to be righteous}, surely no one would still be persecuting me! {This is because} declaring that would abolish how offensive {Jesus dying on} the cross is. ¹²O that those who are upsetting you would just castrate themselves!

¹³Fellow believers, God has called you to free you {from having to obey the laws God gave the Jews}. But he did not free you {from those laws} so you could sin. Instead {of sinning}, serve each other by loving {each other}! ¹⁴{Do this} because one command summarizes all the laws {God gave the Jews}. That {command} is, "Love each person as much as {you love} yourself." ¹⁵Now if you keep attacking and harming each other {like wild animals}, beware that you might completely destroy each other.

¹⁶I am telling you to let the Holy Spirit lead you. {If you do that,} you will definitely not do what your {sinful} selves want to do. ¹⁷{This is} because your sinful selves {want to do what} is contrary to what the Holy Spirit {wants to do}. Also, {what} the Holy Spirit {wants to do is contrary to what} your sinful selves {want to do}. {This is} because they are always against each other. The result is that you do not {always} do the {good} things that you {truly} want to do. ¹⁸However, if the Holy Spirit leads you, the laws {God gave the Jews} do not control you.

¹⁹You clearly know what people do because of their sinful selves. {They} do sexually immoral acts, impure acts, {and} unrestrained immoral acts. ²⁰{They also} worship false gods, do witchcraft, repeatedly act in hostile ways, quarrel with people, act jealously, behave angrily, act ambitiously, act divisively within a group of people, and make divisive groups of people. ²¹{They also} envy others, get drunk, celebrate drunkenly, and do other {sinful} things like these. I warn you now about {doing these sinful things}, just like I warned you previously: anyone who regularly does these {sinful} things will not participate in God's kingdom. ²²Yet the Holy Spirit enables {us believers in the Messiah} to love others and be joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, ²³gentle, and to control ourselves. There is no law that prohibits people from doing these {good} things. ²⁴We who belong to the Messiah Jesus have stopped doing {what} our sinful selves feel and want {to do}.

²⁵Since the Holy Spirit has made us spiritually alive, we must let the Holy Spirit lead us. ²⁶Do not boast. Do not make each other angry. Do not envy each other.

Chapter 6

¹Fellow believers, if you discover that another believer does something wrong, those of you who are spiritually mature should gently correct that person. {While doing so,} you should be very careful so that you do not sin as well. ²Help each other overcome the problems you have. By doing that, you will obey what the Messiah commands. ³{I say this} because people who wrongly think that they are better than others trick themselves {into believing what is not true}. ⁴Instead, each of you should constantly evaluate what you do. {Only} then might you be able to rightly boast about {what} you {have done} on your own instead {of wrongly boasting} about {what} someone else {has done}. ⁵{I say this} because each one {of you} must do what God has given you {to do}.

⁶If fellow believers teach you what God has said, then you must share what you have with them. ⁷Do not trick yourselves: No one can scorn God! {This is} because{, just like} a farmer will harvest exactly the kind of crop that he plants{, people will experience the results of what they have done}. ⁸Those who do what their {sinful} selves want to do will experience the result {of doing so}. God will punish them forever. But those who please the Holy Spirit will experience the result {of doing so}. The Holy Spirit will enable them to live forever {with God}. ⁹Let us not tire of doing what is good, because at the right time we will experience the {good} result {of what we do}. {This will happen} if we do not stop {doing these good things}. ¹⁰Therefore, let us do what is good to everyone whenever we can. {Let us} especially {do what is good} to all our fellow believers {in Jesus}.

¹¹I am writing {this} to you in my own handwriting. Notice how large the letters are! ¹²Everyone who wants to impress {the Jews} with how they appear outwardly is trying to force you to have someone circumcise you. {They} only {do this} in order to prevent the Jews from persecuting them for {believing that} the Messiah Jesus died on the cross {to save us}. ¹³{I say this} because not even those people whom someone has circumcised obey the laws {God gave the Jews}. Rather, they want to circumcise you in order to boast because of how you appear outwardly. ¹⁴As for me, I will ever only boast about our Lord Jesus the Messiah dying on the cross {to save us}! Because Jesus died on the cross, the {sinful} world has become {like} a dead person to me, and I have become {like} a dead person to the {sinful} world. ¹⁵{I may boast about Jesus dying on the cross} because whether people are circumcised or not is not important. Rather, {the Holy Spirit} making them new people is important. ¹⁶I pray that God will make peaceful everyone who behaves in this way and will act kindly to them. {I} also {pray these things} for those Israelites who {trust in Jesus and} belong to God!

¹⁷I have scars on my body because I declared the truth about Jesus. So do not let anyone bother me {about these matters} again!

¹⁸Fellow believers, {I pray that} our Lord Jesus the Messiah {will} be gracious to all of you! May it be so!

Ephesians

Chapter 1

¹I am Paul. The Messiah Jesus sent me to represent him because that is what God wanted. I write this letter to the people whom God has set apart for himself who are living [in the city of Ephesus]^[1] and who are loyal to the Messiah Jesus. ²{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

³Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! He has blessed us with every kind of spiritual blessing that comes from heaven because we belong to the Messiah. ⁴In fact, even before God created the world, he chose us to belong to the Messiah, so that the Messiah could make us completely holy for him. Because God loves us, ⁵he decided long ago to adopt us as his own children by means of Jesus the Messiah. It pleased him to do this, so he did what he wanted to do. ⁶Because of this, we now praise God for being so amazingly kind to us, far beyond what we could deserve, as he blessed us by means of his Son whom he loves.

⁷When Jesus died in our place, he paid the price for our sin. That is, when he died for us, God forgave us our sins because that is how abundantly and generously kind he is. ⁸God knew that we would need him to be extremely kind to us in this way because God knows everything and is completely wise. ⁹In this way, God has now revealed to us his plan that he had not revealed to anyone before—a plan that he was pleased to accomplish through the work of the Messiah. ¹⁰In this plan, when the time was just right, the Messiah would unite all things under himself so that all things in heaven and all things on earth would belong to the Messiah. ¹¹Because of what the Messiah has done, God has also claimed us as his own. He planned to do this long ago, and he always does exactly what he wishes to do. ¹²In God's plan, we Jews, who were the first to trust in the Messiah, would live to praise God because he is so great. ¹³Then you non-Jews also heard the true message, the good news of how God saves you, and you believed in the Messiah. When you did that, God marked you as belonging to the Messiah by giving you the Holy Spirit, as he had promised to do. ¹⁴The Holy Spirit is like a down payment that proves that God will also give to us everything else that he has promised to give to us at that time when he will release everything that he has for us. Praise God because he is so great!

¹⁵Because God has done all of this for you, and because people have told me how you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love all the believers, ¹⁶I thank God for you constantly as I talk to God about you when I pray to him. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the glorious Father, will give you his Spirit to make you wise and to reveal God to you so that you can continually know him better. ¹⁸I pray that God may enable you to see things as they truly are so that you may know the wonderful plan that God has for us because he has called us to be his people. I pray that you may know how wonderful and abundant are the things he promises to give to us and to all the believers. ¹⁹And I pray that you will know how exceedingly powerfully God acts for us who believe in the Messiah. He is just as powerfully strong for us ²⁰as he was for the Messiah when he caused the Messiah to become alive again after he died, and raised him to the place of highest honor in heaven. ²¹The Messiah rules as supreme there over every ruler and powerful spirit on every level of authority and over every being that people revere. He rules over them not only now, but forever. ²²God has made everything to be subject to the Messiah and has appointed the Messiah as the ruler over everything among all believers everywhere. ²³We believers relate to the Messiah as the parts of a person's body relate to its head. He supplies what is lacking for all believers just as he completes everything everywhere.

1:1 ^[1]

Chapter 2

¹Before you trusted the Messiah, you were spiritually dead—you were unable to stop sinning. ²You used to live in a sinful way, guided by the spirit of this world. You were guided by the ruler of the evil spirits who controls the authorities of this world. This ruler is Satan, who now works through the people who disobey God. ³All of us used to live in the same way as these people who disobey God; we did the evil things that we desired, things that would bring pleasure to our bodies and our minds. We deserved that God should be very angry with us, just as he is with the other people.

⁴But God is very merciful to us because he loves us very much. ⁵God loved us so much that even when we were spiritually dead and constantly sinning, he made us alive by joining us to the Messiah. Remember, when God saved you from being spiritually dead, he was being very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve. ⁶God saved us from being spiritually dead just as he raised Jesus from being physically dead and he made us spiritually alive with him. Then he gave us seats of honor to rule with the Messiah Jesus in heaven. ⁷He did that to show to everyone in all future times how exceedingly gracious he is in being kind to us by joining us to the Messiah Jesus.

⁸So God was very kind to you in a way that you did not deserve when he saved you from being spiritually dead. He did this because you trust in Jesus. You have not saved yourselves; this is a gift from God— ⁹a gift that no one can earn, so no one can boast and say that he has saved himself. ¹⁰So God is making us what he wants us to be; through the Messiah Jesus he has created us as new people to do good things—things that God had previously arranged for us to do.

¹¹So remember that previously you non-Jewish people according to who your ancestors were did not belong to God's people. The Jews insulted you by calling you "the uncircumcised." They call themselves "the circumcised." By this they mean that they, not you, are God's people, although circumcision is something that humans do that only changes the body, not something that God does that changes the spirit. ¹²Remember that, at that time, you were separated from the Messiah. You were foreigners to the people of Israel. You did not share in the things that God promised in his agreements with them. You did not confidently expect that God would save you. No, you were living in this world completely without God. ¹³But now, because you have trusted in Jesus the Messiah, God has brought you into his family, even though before that you did not know him. This was possible because the Messiah died on the cross for you.

¹⁴It is the Messiah who has made it possible for Jews and non-Jews to live peacefully with each other. He made the two separate groups into one group. The two groups hated each other, but he took away every reason for hating each other when he died for all of us. ¹⁵He made it no longer necessary for us to obey the commandments and requirements of the Jewish law for him to accept us. He did this in order to make the Jews and the non-Jews into one new people who would live peacefully together because of their relationship to him. ¹⁶He did this in order to reconcile both groups to God as one group by dying on the cross for all of them. By dying for them, Jesus made it possible for them to stop being enemies to each other and to God. ¹⁷Jesus came and announced the good news that we can be at peace with God; he announced this to you non-Jews, who did not know about God, and to us Jews, who did know about God. ¹⁸Because of what Jesus did for us, both Jews and non-Jews now can come to God the Father with the help of God's Spirit.

¹⁹Therefore now you non-Jews are no longer left out of God's people, but instead you are fellow members with those whom God has set apart for himself, and you belong to God's family. ²⁰You are like stones that God has put together into a building, and the apostles and prophets are like the foundation stones of that building. You depend on what they have taught, just as building stones depend on the foundation stones below them to form a wall that is upright and strong. The Messiah Jesus himself is like the cornerstone, which is the most important stone of the building. ²¹Jesus determines where each person belongs, just as the cornerstone determines where each stone fits in the building. Just as a builder joins stones together to make a holy temple, Jesus is assembling his family of believers to be one holy group which serves the Lord. ²²Because you belong to Jesus, he is building you up together, both Jews and non-Jews, into one family that is like a building in which God lives by means of his Spirit.

Chapter 3

¹Because God is working out this plan for you non-Jews, I, Paul, pray to the Father for you, even as I am in prison because I serve the Messiah Jesus for your sake. ²I assume that people have told you about me, that God has given me the task of communicating to you non-Jews his plan to be extremely kind to you. ³God told me this message that people did not understand before by revealing it to me directly, just as I wrote to you before briefly. ⁴As you read that, you can perceive that I clearly understand things that God had not previously revealed about the Messiah. ⁵Formerly, God did not fully reveal this message to people, but now his Spirit has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. ⁶The message is this: the non-Jews now share together with Jews the spiritual riches of God and belong to the same group of God's people and will share all the things God has promised to his people because they are joined to the Messiah Jesus as a result of believing the good news. ⁷I now serve God by telling people this good news. God was very kind to me and gave me this work to do even though I am not worthy of it, and he enables me to do it by powerfully working in me.

⁸Although I am the least worthy of all of God's people, God kindly gave me this gift: he appointed me to proclaim to the non-Jews the good news about the unending spiritual blessings that the Messiah has for us ⁹and to enable everyone to understand what God's plan is. This plan is something that God, who created everything, has kept hidden from long ago. ¹⁰God hid this plan so that as he reveals it now by making it happen in those who believe, he also reveals to the spiritual authorities at the highest levels how profoundly wise he is. ¹¹This is the plan that God has always had, and it is what he accomplished through the work of the Messiah Jesus, our Lord. ¹²So now, because of what Jesus has done, we can come to God freely and confidently because, when we trust in Jesus, he joins us to himself. ¹³So please do not be discouraged by the things that I am suffering here in prison on your behalf, because they produce a glorious result for you.

¹⁴Because God has done all this for you, I kneel and pray to God our Father. ¹⁵He is the original father, who gave the pattern for every family in heaven and on the earth to follow. ¹⁶I pray that God will give you his Spirit to strengthen your spirit in proportion to how abundantly great he is. ¹⁷I pray that the Messiah may stay as close to you as your own hearts because you trust in him, and that everything that you do and say will be a result of God's love for you and your love for him and others ¹⁸so that you may be fully able to understand, along with all of God's people, how very much the Messiah loves us. ¹⁹I pray that you will come to know how much the Messiah loves us, even though he loves us so much that we cannot understand it. I pray that God will give you a full measure of everything that he is.

²⁰Praise God, who is able to do much more than anything that we ask him to do, or even that we think that he can do, because of how powerfully he works within us! ²¹May all believers praise him for how great he is and for the awesome work that he has done through the Messiah Jesus! May they praise him throughout all generations forever! May it be so.

Chapter 4

¹Because of all this, as someone who is in prison because I serve the Lord Jesus, I appeal to you to live in a way that honors Jesus, who called you to live for him. ²Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, enduring the bothersome things that others do because you love each other. ³Since God's Spirit has united you, do everything that you can to remain united with one another. Bind yourselves together by acting peacefully toward each other. ⁴God only has one family of believers and one Holy Spirit, just as he also called all of you to receive the one and only thing that people can hope for, that belongs to you whom God has called. ⁵There is only one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, only one way to believe in him, and they baptized us to show that we belong to him alone. ⁶There is one God, who is the Father of all of us, whether Jew or non-Jew. He rules over all of us, works through all of us, and is in all of us.

⁷To each one of us God has given spiritual gifts in just the way that the Messiah has decided that we should have them. ⁸That is why the scripture says,

As he went up to the high place,
he brought with him many people whom he had captured,
and gave gifts to his people.

⁹The words “he went up” certainly make us know that the Messiah had also previously gone down to the lower parts of the earth. ¹⁰The Messiah, who came down to earth from heaven, is also the one who returned upward to the most exalted position in heaven in order that he might fill the universe. ¹¹As gifts to his people, he appointed some of them to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to seek out people to tell them the good news about Jesus, and some to care for and to teach the groups of believers. ¹²God appointed all of them to prepare God’s people to do the work of serving others so that all the people who belong to the Messiah might become spiritually strong. ¹³This work will continue until all of us together become what God wants us to be: united as we together fully trust in the Son of God and experience his working in us, and completely mature as a group of believers—as fully mature in trusting and knowing God as the Messiah himself. ¹⁴Then we will no longer be spiritually immature, as little children are immature. We will no longer follow every new teaching, always changing what we believe like a boat that goes one way and then the other as the wind and waves change direction. We will not allow clever people who teach what is false to deceive us with their lies. ¹⁵Rather than that, as we lovingly speak to each other what is true, let us become more and more like the Messiah in every way as he directs us, just like a person’s head directs the person’s body. ¹⁶He is the one who joins us all together and keeps us connected to each other. He teaches us how to support each other and to work in a coordinated way as he gives the ability that is appropriate to each one of us, just as a person’s head does that for the parts of his body. In this way, as we love each other, we will grow together and make each other stronger.

¹⁷For that reason, and with the authority of the Lord Jesus, I tell you this: from now on you must not live in the same way as the other non-Jews live. The way that they live comes from an empty way of thinking. ¹⁸They are unable to think clearly about what is right or wrong because they try to live completely separated from God. They do this because they do not know what they are missing and because they stubbornly refuse to obey God. ¹⁹They have become unable to sense if something is good or bad, and so they have devoted themselves to doing whatever shameful things their bodies desire. They commit all kinds of immoral acts and want to do them more and more.

²⁰But that is not how you learned to live when you learned about the Messiah, ²¹to the extent that you have heard and understood the message about Jesus and have learned from him, since his way is the true way to live. ²²Your teachers taught you to stop living the way that you used to live. Because you desired to do evil things, you deceived yourselves into thinking that those things were good. Living like that was destroying you spiritually. ²³So you must let God give you a new spirit and a new way of thinking, ²⁴and you must start living like the new person that God created you in his own image to be. He created you to live in the right way with each other and with himself, in the true way of Jesus.

²⁵So stop lying to one another. Speak truthfully to each other because we belong to each other as members of God’s family. ²⁶Be angry about sinful behavior, but do not sin because you are angry. Before the end of each day, take care of whatever has made you angry ²⁷so that you will not allow the devil to do evil things among you. ²⁸Those who have been stealing must not steal anymore. Instead, they must work hard, doing good work by their own efforts so that they may have something to give to those who are needy. ²⁹Do not say harmful things. Instead, say good things that will encourage people when they need help so that God can work through your words to benefit those who hear. ³⁰God has marked you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, who will be with you until the day that the Messiah will rescue you from this world. So do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad by how you live. ³¹Do your best to completely stop behaving in these ways: Do not be resentful or furious toward others or even become angry with others. Do not shout abusively at others or slander others. Never act maliciously in any way.

³²Rather than behave like that, be kind to one another. Act mercifully toward each other. Forgive each other in the same way that God also forgave you through what the Messiah has done for you.

Chapter 5

¹Because of what God has done for you, imitate him just as children imitate the father who loves them dearly. ²Do everything in a way that shows that you love others. Be like the Messiah, who loved us so much that he willingly died for us on the cross as the offering and sacrifice to God in our place. This sacrifice pleased God very much. ³But there should be no reason for anyone to even suggest that any of you are involved in sexual sin or any kind of immoral or obsessive sexual behavior. Such sins do not belong among God's people. ⁴When you speak to each other, do not tell obscene stories or say foolish things or joke about committing sins. Such things are not what people who belong to God talk about. Instead, express the things that you are thankful for. ⁵It is quite true that these people will be excluded from the kingdom of the Messiah who is God: everyone who is sexually immoral or indecent, or who is obsessed with sex, which is the same as worshiping an idol. ⁶Do not let anyone deceive you by telling you that God will not punish people who do these things. It is because of these very things that God will punish the people who disobey him.

⁷So do not join with those people in doing these kinds of sins. ⁸Remember that before you believed in the Lord Jesus, you did not know what was true, just as people who are in a dark place do not know what is around them. But now it is as though you have come out into the light, because the Lord has shown to you what is true. So live in the way that the Lord has shown to you. ⁹Because just as people who have light will walk in the right way, as a result of knowing Jesus you can always live in a way that is good, right, and true. ¹⁰As you live this way, keep learning what pleases the Lord. ¹¹So do not participate together with those who are doing the worthless deeds that they do in spiritual darkness. Instead, expose to everyone how worthless those deeds are. ¹²Of course it is shameful for God's people to even talk about the evil things that those people do in secret, ¹³but it is necessary for us to expose them so that people can know and understand that these deeds are evil. This is like when we bring something into the light in order to reveal to everyone what it truly is. Then people can examine and judge that thing that light has exposed. ¹⁴Before you knew God you were like someone asleep or dead in a dark place. This is what believers are talking about when they say,

"You who are asleep, wake up!

You who are dead, come out of the darkness and live!

The Messiah will show you what is true,

just as a light that shines shows people what was in the darkness."

¹⁵So be very careful how you live. Do not behave as foolish people do. Instead, behave as wise people do. ¹⁶Do the most good that you can with the time that you have, because people are doing more and more evil things every day. ¹⁷So be wise, understand well what it is that the Lord Jesus wants you to do, and do it!

¹⁸Do not become drunk by drinking alcoholic drinks, because people cannot control themselves when they are drunk. Instead, let God's Spirit control what you do at all times. ¹⁹Sing to each other Psalms and songs about the Messiah and songs that God's Spirit gives you. Let this music come from deep within you as sincere praise to the Lord. ²⁰At all times thank God the Father for everything because of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah has done for you. ²¹Humbly submit yourselves to each other because you deeply respect the Messiah.

²²⁻²³Wives should submit to their own husband's leadership as they do to the Lord Jesus because the husband is the leader of the wife as also the Messiah is the leader of the worldwide assembly of believers. He is the Savior who has saved all believers from being condemned for their sins. ²⁴As for wives, just as all believers submit themselves to the authority of the Messiah, in the same way wives must also submit themselves completely to the authority of their husbands.

²⁵Each of you husbands, love your wife as much as the Messiah loved all who would believe in him. He even gave up his own life for us on the cross ²⁶so that he might set us apart for himself. He purified us by telling us his plan to forgive us and by removing our sins as though washing them away in water. ²⁷He did this so that he could present the group of all believers to himself as a glorious group that does not have any sin or moral imperfection, but instead is holy and perfect, like a glorious bride ready to meet her groom. ²⁸In that same way, each man should love his own wife as much as he loves his own body. A man who loves his wife is also, by doing that, loving himself ²⁹⁻³⁰because no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he feeds his own body and cares for it, just like the Messiah also cares for all us believers in his worldwide assembly. We have become one group of believers that belongs to him. ³¹The scriptures say this about people who marry:

“Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and will join himself to his wife, and the two of them will become as though they were one person.”

³²There is very much about this that we cannot understand, but I am telling you that this example of a husband and wife also helps us to understand the relationship between the Messiah and the group of people who belong to him. ³³However, as for you, each man must love his wife just as he loves himself, and each woman must deeply respect her husband.

Chapter 6

¹As for you who are children, obey your parents as a way of serving the Lord Jesus because it is right for you to do that. ²God commanded in the scriptures,

“Greatly respect your father and mother.” That is the first law that God commanded in which he also promised something. He promised,

³“If you do that, you will prosper, and you will live a long time on the earth.”

⁴As for you who are fathers, do not treat your children in a way that makes them become angry. Instead, bring them up well by instructing them and by disciplining them in the manner that the Lord Jesus wants you to do.

⁵As for you who are slaves, very respectfully and sincerely obey those who are your masters here on the earth, just as you obey the Messiah. ⁶Obey them not only when they are watching you, as people do who only care about appearing to work hard. Instead, work as though you were slaves of the Messiah, doing enthusiastically what God wants you to do. ⁷Serve your masters willingly, as though you are serving the Lord Jesus rather than people. ⁸Do this because you know that the Lord Jesus will reward each person for whatever good deeds that person has done. It makes no difference whether that person was a slave or a free person.

⁹As for you who are masters, just like your slaves should serve you well, in the same way you must treat them well. Stop threatening them. Do not forget that the one who is both their Lord and your Lord is in heaven and he judges all people equally whether their position is high or low.

¹⁰Finally, rely completely on the Lord Jesus to strengthen you spiritually because he is immeasurably strong. ¹¹Just as a soldier puts on all of his armor to be ready to fight his enemy, you should use every spiritual resource that God provides for you so that you may successfully resist the devil when he cleverly schemes against you. ¹²Remember that we are not fighting against other human beings. Instead, we are fighting against the demons who have authority to rule over the people doing evil things in this evil time, that is, against the evil spirits who live in the air. ¹³That is why you must use well all of the spiritual resources that God has given you, like a soldier who puts on all of his armor. If you do that, you will be able to resist the evil spirits when they attack you. You will also be ready for when they attack you again and able to continue to live well for God.

¹⁴You must be ready to resist the devil and his evil spirits just as soldiers must always be ready to resist the enemy. To do that, keep thinking about the true things that God has shown you. Also, continue to act righteously. This will

protect you like a soldier's armor protects his chest. ¹⁵Just like a soldier who keeps his boots on, be ready to go anywhere you are needed for the sake of the good news that tells people how to be at peace with God. ¹⁶Just as a soldier holds up a shield to stop the flaming arrows that his enemy shoots at him, you must keep trusting firmly in the Lord at all times. That will protect you from all of the things that your enemy, Satan, the evil one, will try to do to harm you spiritually. ¹⁷Also, as a soldier relies on a helmet to protect his head, rely on the fact that God has saved you. And just as a soldier uses a sword to defeat his enemies, use the weapon that God's Spirit gives you, which is the message that comes from God. ¹⁸Whenever you pray to God and request things from him, always let God's Spirit direct you in how you pray and what you pray for. To be most effective, keep watching to see what God is doing, and be persistent as you continue to pray for all of God's people. ¹⁹Pray for me, also, that God would tell me what I should say whenever I speak, in order that I may boldly tell others the good news about the Messiah that people did not know before. ²⁰It is because I have been telling people about the Messiah that I am now representing him here in prison. Pray that as I continue to tell others about the Messiah, I may speak boldly because that is how I ought to speak.

²¹Now in order that you may know about what is happening with me and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything that is happening here. He is a fellow believer whom we all love very much, and he serves the Lord Jesus faithfully. ²²That is the reason that I am sending him to you with this letter; I want you to know how we are, and I want him to comfort and encourage you.

²³I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah may give to all of you fellow believers a peaceful spirit and enable you to love each other and to continue to trust in God. ²⁴I pray that God will continue to act graciously among all people who steadfastly love our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

Philippians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter} to all of God's people who are joined to the Messiah Jesus in {the city of} Philippi. Timothy is with me. We are servants of the Messiah Jesus. {We especially write this letter} for the leaders of the believers and for those who assist {them}. ²May God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

³Every time I think about you, I thank my God whom I worship {because of you}. ⁴I always pray joyfully each time I pray for all of you. ⁵{The reason I pray joyfully is} because you have partnered with me in telling people the good news from the time you first believed {it} and you continue to partner with me now. ⁶God started his good work within you {when you first believed in him}, and I am confident that he will continue that work until Jesus the Messiah returns. ⁷I love you all greatly, so it is right for me to think about you in this way. God has kindly blessed us to share together {in this work}, both {as I endure} being a prisoner and also as I explain to people why the good news {about Jesus} is true. ⁸I desire very much to be with you all, and I love you all in the same way as Jesus the Messiah loves you. God knows that this is true.

⁹I pray that God will enable you to love {God and others} in a way that continues to increase. As you increasingly love others, I pray that God will also help you to know {him} better and to understand {how to love others} in all situations. ¹⁰The reason I pray this is so that you will test and choose what is most pleasing {to God} so that then you will be completely free of doing anything wrong when the Messiah returns. ¹¹{Instead of doing wrong things,} you will be busy doing the truly good things that Jesus the Messiah enables us to do. These things will cause people to honor and praise God.

¹²My fellow believers, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have not hindered people from hearing the good news. Instead, even more people have been able to hear the good news because I am in prison.

¹³In fact, all the military guards here and many other people now know that I am in prison because I proclaim the good news about the Messiah. ¹⁴Also, because the believers {here} have seen what the Lord has done through me in prison, most of them now proclaim the good news about Jesus more courageously and fearlessly {than they did before}.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷Some people are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah because they want to {obey God} and because they love {me and others}. They understand that God has appointed me to explain to people why the good news {about Jesus} is true. But some are not honest about why they are proclaiming the good news about the Messiah. They do it only because they want to promote themselves. They are envious of me and want to cause trouble for me. They think that I will suffer even more in prison as they become famous for proclaiming the good news. ¹⁸But what they want to do to me is not important! The important thing is that people are proclaiming {the good news about} the Messiah, either for good reasons or for bad reasons. So I am rejoicing that people are spreading the message about the Messiah! And I will continue to rejoice in that!

¹⁹{I will rejoice} because I know how this situation will turn out: that God will deliver me {from prison}. He will do this because you are praying for me and because the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah is helping me. ²⁰{I know that this will happen, because} I very confidently expect that I will continue to faithfully honor the Messiah. {I expect and desire that} I will boldly honor the Messiah by my actions now and always, whether by the way I live or by the way I die.

²¹As for me, I live to honor the Messiah, and if I die, it will be even better for me. ²²But if I continue to live here in my body, I will be able to productively serve the Messiah. So I do not know which I prefer, {to live or to die}. ²³It is difficult for me to choose which I prefer, {living or dying}. I long to leave {this world} and go to be with the Messiah,

because to be with the Messiah is very much better {than being here}, ²⁴but I need to remain alive here on earth in order to continue to help you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain alive with you all in order to help you to be even more joyful as you continue to trust in Jesus. ²⁶{I will do this} so that you will praise Jesus the Messiah even more because of me, because I will come and visit you again.

²⁷The important thing is that you act in a way that honors the good news about the Messiah. {Do this} so that people will tell me that you are working hard together in a unified way as you resist those who oppose the message about the Messiah and as you help people to live according to the good news. {You must act in this way} whether or not I visit you again. ²⁸Do not let the people who are against you make you afraid by anything {that they do or say}. When they see that you are not afraid of them, they will know that God will destroy them, but he will save you. All of this is from God. ²⁹God does this for you because he has given you the gift of suffering for the Messiah, along with the gift of believing in him. ³⁰You saw how I had to resist the people who opposed me {when I was there in Philippi}. Now you have to resist the people who are opposing you in the same way. As people tell you even now, I am still struggling to resist such people.

Chapter 2

¹Since the Messiah encourages us, since he comforts us with his love, since the Spirit has produced fellowship {among you}, since {God gives you} affection and compassion {toward one another}, ²make me completely happy by doing the following things: Agree with one another, love one another, be closely united with one another, be united in your thinking. ³Never try to selfishly make yourselves more important than others, and do not think of yourselves as better than others. Instead, be humble, and treat others as more important than yourselves. ⁴Each one of you should not only be concerned about your needs. Instead, you should also be concerned about other people and their needs.

⁵Think the same way as the Messiah Jesus thought:

⁶Although he was in every way the same as God, he did not insist on keeping all the privileges of being equal with God.

⁷Rather, he gave up divine privileges

and became a servant to others

and became a human being. When he had become a human being,

⁸he humbled himself further. Specifically, {he humbled himself} by obeying God so far as to be willing to die. He was even willing to die by being crucified on a cross.

⁹Because {the Messiah humbly obeyed God,} God also honored him very much;

he honored him more than any other person or being,

¹⁰so that before Jesus,

every being will bow down and honor him,

beings who are in heaven and beings on earth and beings under the earth;

¹¹and every mouth will say,

that Jesus the Messiah is Lord,

so that God the Father is honored.

¹²As a result of these things, my dearly loved fellow believers, as you have always obeyed God when I was with you, now that I am apart from you, you also must obey him even more. Every one of you, work with God in his saving work within you, and do this humbly reverencing God. ¹³For God is doing something within you so that you will want to do—and then actually do—the good things that please him.

¹⁴Do everything without grumbling or quarreling. ¹⁵Behave like that in order that you may be completely faultless, children of God, who keep yourselves from evil as you live among the wicked people of this world. Then, as you live among them, you will stand out brightly against the darkness of sin. ¹⁶Tell others the message about how to have eternal life. {Do all these things} so that at the time when the Messiah returns, I will be able to rejoice that I did not work hard among you uselessly.

¹⁷And I am joyful and I will rejoice with you all, despite suffering daily or going through times when those who oppose the gospel try to kill me. I will gladly suffer along with you, adding to your service which you offer because you believe in him. ¹⁸In the same way also, each of you should rejoice regarding these things; you should rejoice together with me!

¹⁹I am hoping that the Lord Jesus will soon allow me to be able to send Timothy to visit you. I want this visit to happen because I hope he can encourage me when he returns with news of you. ²⁰I have no one else like Timothy who genuinely cares for you. ²¹All the others whom I might send to you are concerned only about their own matters. They are not concerned enough about what Jesus the Messiah considers important. ²²But you know that Timothy has proved that he serves the Lord and others faithfully. You know that he has served the Lord closely together with me in proclaiming the good news to people. ²³I am hoping to send Timothy to you as soon as I know what will happen to me. ²⁴And I am confident that the Lord will allow me to be released soon, so that I myself will also come to you.

²⁵I have concluded that I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a fellow believer and my fellow worker, and he endures difficulties together with me just like soldiers endure difficulties together. He is your messenger and servant, whom you sent to help me when I was needy. ²⁶Epaphroditus eagerly desires to be there with you at Philippi, and he is concerned for you {that you would be worried about him} since you learned of his illness.

²⁷Indeed, he was so sick that he almost died. But God pitied him, and he also pitied me, and as a result, he healed him. God pitied me so that I would not grieve even more. ²⁸So I am sending him back to you as quickly as possible. I will do this in order that you may rejoice when you see him again, and so that I might grieve less.

²⁹Receive Epaphroditus joyfully as a fellow believer, and honor other believers who are like him. ³⁰Do this because, as Epaphroditus was working for the Messiah, he almost died. He knew that he might die as a result of helping me, and he nearly did die. He helped me in order to supply the things that I needed, something you could not do because you are far away from me.

Chapter 3

¹Finally, my fellow believers, rejoice in who God is, and rejoice about what he has done and is doing. Though I will now write to you about the same things that I mentioned to you before, this is not tiresome for me, and it will protect you from being led astray by those who teach things that are not true.

²Guard yourselves against the ones who are like dirty dogs. Guard yourselves against the ones who teach what is false. Guard yourselves against the ones who cut their bodies. ³But as for us—we ourselves are what it truly means to be circumcised. The Spirit of God enables us to truly worship God, and we glory in the Messiah Jesus rather than trusting in religious acts such as circumcision. ⁴However, if anyone thinks they could trust in religious acts, I could; and I even more than others. {I will tell you why.}

⁵I was circumcised eight days after I was born. I am from the people of Israel and am a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew who has retained the Hebrew language and way of living. As regards obeying the laws of Moses, I was a Pharisee, and therefore I strictly obeyed all the laws of Moses and teachings of the scribes. ⁶With

regard to being passionate about what I believed, I was so extremely passionate about what I believed that I caused those who followed Jesus to suffer. With regard to doing what God required in the law of Moses and doing what the scribes required concerning it, I was without fault.

⁷But all the things that I formerly trusted in, these same things I now consider to be worthless because of the Messiah. ⁸Instead, even more, I now regard all things as worthless compared to how great it is to know the Messiah, Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have willingly given up all things and I think of them as feces to throw away in order that I might have the Messiah. ⁹I have willingly given up the things I formerly trusted in so that I might be fully united with the Messiah by believing in him, and not by obeying the laws that God gave to Moses. {I do this because I know} that the only way to please God is by believing in the Messiah. ¹⁰I want to know the Messiah better and better. I want to continually experience him working powerfully in my life, just like God worked powerfully when he caused the Messiah to become alive after he had died. I also want to be continually willing to suffer in order that I may obey God, just like the Messiah suffered in order that he might obey God. I want to become like him in his death. ¹¹{I want all of this because} I somehow want God to cause me to live again after I have died.

¹²I do not claim that I have already attained this. Nor do I say that God has already finished working in me to make me like Jesus. But I earnestly try to become more and more like Jesus, because this is why Jesus the Messiah took hold of me. ¹³My fellow believers, I certainly do not think that I have already become completely like Jesus. Nor have I fully known him. Rather, I have determined to forget about the things that are in the past and to work hard for the things that are in front of me. ¹⁴Instead, I concentrate only on continuing to become more and more like Jesus until I die. As a result, because of my relationship with Jesus the Messiah, God will reward me in heaven. ¹⁵So then, all of us who are mature believers should think this same way. But if you think differently about anything I have just written, God also will show this to you. ¹⁶However, regarding the true things that God has already revealed to us, let us all conduct our lives according to these things.

¹⁷My fellow believers, join together in imitating me, and observe closely those people who live as we do. ¹⁸There are many people who act in a way that shows that they oppose the message about the Messiah dying on the cross. I have told you about these people many times before, and now I am sad, even crying, as I tell you about them again. ¹⁹God will severely punish these people. These people serve their physical desires rather than God, and they are proud of the very things of which they should be ashamed. These people only think about earthly things instead of heavenly things. ²⁰As for us, we are citizens of heaven, and it is from heaven that we eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus the Messiah to return and rescue us. ²¹God will change the weak and humble bodies that we have now to be bodies like the glorious resurrected body of Jesus. He will do this by his power, by which he is able to control all things.

Chapter 4

¹My fellow believers, I love you, and I greatly desire to see you. I rejoice because of you; you are the reason God will reward me. In the way that I have just described to you {in this letter}, continue to be steadfastly committed to the Lord, my fellow believers whom I love.

²I urge you, Euodia, and I urge you, Syntyche, to again have a peaceful relationship with each other, because you are both joined to the Lord. ³And I also urge you, my faithful partner, to please help these women. {Please help them because} they have helped me spread the good news, as have Clement and the rest of my fellow laborers, whose names God has written in his book of those who will live with him forever.

⁴Always rejoice in who God is and what he has done and is doing! I say again, rejoice! ⁵Act in such a way that all people see that you are gentle. {Do this because} the Lord will return soon. ⁶Do not worry about anything. Instead, in every situation pray to God, and tell him exactly what you need, and ask him to help you. And thank God for all he does for you. ⁷As a result God will enable you not to worry about anything, and he will protect how you think and feel, as you are joined to the Messiah Jesus.

⁸Finally, my fellow believers, think about whatever is true, whatever is worth honoring, whatever is right, whatever is faultless, whatever is pleasing, whatever is worth admiring, whatever is good, whatever is worth praising: These are the things that you should always be thinking about. ⁹Continually do the things that I have taught you and the things you have heard me say and the things you have seen me do. If you do these things, the God who causes us to be at peace will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoice greatly and thank the Lord, because now, after some time, {by sending money to me} you have once again shown that you are concerned about me. Indeed, you were concerned about me all the time, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹Do not think that I am saying this because I am concerned about lacking something I need. Rather, I have learned how to be happy no matter what situation I am in. ¹²I have learned how to be happy when I do not have what I need and how to be happy when I have more than I need. I have learned how to be happy when I am hungry and when I have plenty of food to eat. I have learned how to be happy in all circumstances and at all times. ¹³Because the Messiah strengthens me, I am able to respond well to every situation. ¹⁴Nevertheless, you did the right thing to help me in my difficult situation.

¹⁵You yourselves, my friends there at Philippi, know that during the time I first proclaimed the good news to you, when I left there to go out from the province of Macedonia, no assembly of believers except you sent me funds or helped me in any way! ¹⁶Even when I was in the city of Thessalonica, more than once you sent me money to supply what I needed. ¹⁷I do not say this because I desire that you give me money. Instead, I desire that God will abundantly reward you {as a result of your helping me}.

¹⁸You have given me a very generous gift, and, as a result, I have all I require and more. I have an abundant supply of what I need, because you sent Epaphroditus to me with your gift. God considers that your gift is very acceptable, and he is very pleased with it. ¹⁹God, whom I serve, will supply everything you need, because you belong to Jesus the Messiah and because he owns all things. ²⁰Now, may our God and Father be praised and honored forever! Amen!

²¹Greet for me all God's people there. They all belong to Jesus the Messiah. The believers with me greet you also.

²²All of God's people here send their greetings to you. The fellow believers who work in the palace of Caesar, the emperor, especially send their greetings to you.

²³I desire and pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly toward you all. Amen.

Colossians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {write this letter to you,} and Timothy our fellow believer {is with me}. God sent me to represent the Messiah Jesus, because that is what God chose to do. ²{I send this letter} to you who are God's people and faithful fellow believers united to the Messiah, {who live} in {the city of} Colossae. {May} God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} be kind to you and make you peaceful.

³We pray for you very often. {When we do,} we thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, ⁴{because} have learned that you trust in the Messiah Jesus and that you love all God's people. ⁵{You do these things} because you are confidently waiting for everything that God is keeping for you in heaven. You first learned about all that God has for you when you heard the true message, {which is} the good news about the Messiah. ⁶Just as you heard and believed this good news {in Colossae}, increasing numbers of people in many places are also hearing and believing it. These people are living in a different way now, just as you have been living in a different way since you first learned {about it} and truly experienced how God acts kindly {toward us}. ⁷This is what Epaphras told you {would happen}. He works with us for the Messiah, and we love him. He faithfully serves the Messiah as our representative. ⁸He told us that you love {all God's people}, just as God's Spirit {has empowered you to do}.

⁹Because of everything that Epaphras told us, since the time when he first told us {about you}, we have joined him in consistently praying for you. {When we pray for you,} we ask God to show you everything that he wants you to do and {to make you} able to understand everything that God's Spirit {is teaching you}. ¹⁰{We have been praying that you know what God wants} so that you can live in a way that honors the Lord and pleases him in every way. {When you live this way, you will be} doing every sort of good thing and continually knowing God better. ¹¹{As you live this way,} God will greatly strengthen you to be able to patiently endure in all situations, and to do so joyfully. God can strengthen you greatly because he is gloriously powerful. ¹²{Then you will continually} thank {God our} Father, {because} he has made you worthy to take part in everything that he has to give to his people when they are with him.

¹³God our Father has delivered us from the evil one, who used to control us, and he has given us to his Son, whom he loves, so that now we can obey his Son. ¹⁴Because we are united to his Son, God has set us free; {that is,} he has forgiven our sins. ¹⁵God's Son perfectly reveals who God is, even though no one can see God. The Son existed before God created anything, and he has first place over everything that God has created. ¹⁶{You can know that the Son existed before anything else existed and has first place over everything} because the Father and the Son together created everything that exists. {This includes} everything in heaven and everything on earth, and everything that we can see and everything that we cannot see, {including the spiritual beings} such as thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities. The Father and the Son together created everything, and everything exists to honor the Son. ¹⁷The Son existed before any of creation existed, and he sustains and connects all of it. ¹⁸In regard to the church, {that is, all believers,} he rules over it as people's heads rule over their bodies. He made it possible for the church to begin {when he was} the first person to live again after dying{, never to die again}. Because of these things about him, he is greater and more important than anything and anybody else. ¹⁹{The Son rules over everything} because the Son is fully God, just as the Father gladly willed him to be. ²⁰{God the Father} also {gladly chose to work} through the Son to reconcile to himself everything {and every person that he created} in the whole universe. {God did this} through his Son when his Son died on the cross, which made everything peaceful between God and his creation.

²¹Before {you believed in the Messiah}, you did not want to be close {to God}, and you were hostile {to him} because everything you thought and did was evil. ²²But {that has all changed} now {that you believe in Jesus!} God the Father has repaired the relationship between himself and you {by working} through his Son when his Son

became human and died. {God the Father repaired the relationship} so that you can dwell with him as people who are completely free from sin. ²³{This is all true about you} as long as you continue confidently to believe {in the Messiah}, and as long as you do not give up confidently hoping {for God to do what he has promised} in the good news that you heard and that people all over the world have heard. I, Paul, serve God {by proclaiming to people} this same good news.

²⁴At the present time I suffer cheerfully {because it is} for your benefit. I am suffering physically to complete {my part of} the suffering that the Messiah began on behalf of {his people,} the church, which is like the Messiah's own body. ²⁵God called me to serve his church, and he appointed me {specifically} to carry out his plan that concerns you. {My part of this plan is} to proclaim {to you non-Jews} the full message from God. ²⁶God kept this message a secret, concealing it from people for a long time. But now he has made the message known to his people. ²⁷God has been wanting to tell his people this very glorious message that was secret, which applies to non-Jews {as well as to Jews}. The secret is that the Messiah is united to you {non-Jews}, which means that you can confidently expect to become glorious beings like the Messiah. ²⁸{This is the Messiah} whom we announce {to everyone}. {When we talk about him,} we warn and teach each person as wisely as we can. {We do these things} so that each of these people may become spiritually mature in each person's union with the Messiah. ²⁹I work hard in all that I do in order to accomplish that goal. {I can do this} because the Messiah is powerfully enabling me to do it.

Chapter 2

¹{I write these things} because I want to inform you about how hard I am working. {I work hard} for you, for the fellow-believers who live in {the city of} Laodicea, and for all fellow-believers who have not met me in person. ²{I work this hard} in order to encourage all of you {who have not met me} so that you unite yourselves together with love for each other. {I want you} to completely and confidently understand the secret that God had previously kept hidden. {This secret is about} the Messiah. ³This secret{, which is the Messiah,} includes within it everything that is valuable, including wise thinking. ⁴I am telling you about this secret in order that no person who argues persuasively will be able to convince you to believe what is not true. ⁵{You can know that those who argue persuasively are wrong} because I care about you and think about you, even though I am not with you in person. I am very happy to see that you are behaving properly and that you firmly believe in the Messiah.

⁶Now {that I have told you the truth about the good news and about me}, I want you to behave in a way that fits with how God has united you to the Messiah. You should keep behaving as you did when you accepted the Messiah Jesus the Lord. ⁷{Behaving in this way includes} staying firmly united to him, just as a plant's roots hold it firmly in place. {It also includes} depending completely on him, just as a house stands on its foundation. {It also includes} confidently trusting the Messiah, just as Epaphras taught you, and giving thanks more and more.

⁸Be on the alert so that no one who tries to lead you away from the truth will succeed. Anyone who tries to lead you away will use human thinking that is meaningless and deceptive. {Such a false message comes} from what older generations teach younger generations and from what humans normally think about the world, not from the Messiah. ⁹{I mention the Messiah} because he, a human, is fully God. ¹⁰In addition, you have everything you need since God has united you to the Messiah, who rules over {the spiritual beings, including} every ruler and every authority. ¹¹When God united you to the Messiah, it was as if God the Father had circumcised you. I do not mean that a human physically cut flesh off you. {Rather, instead of cutting off flesh,} God removed your weak and sinful parts. {God} circumcised {you in this way} through what the Messiah accomplished. ¹²{Here is another way to understand what God has done for you:} when they baptized you, it was as if {you died and} people buried you {because God the Father included you} when {the Messiah died and} people buried him. And it was as if God the Father brought you back to life {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {This happened} because you believed that God the Father works powerfully, particularly when he brought the Messiah back to life. ¹³You used to be spiritually dead, because you {often} sinned against God and because you were non-Jews {and not part of God's people}. But God the Father brought you back to life spiritually {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {This means that} he has forgiven us for all the wrong things we have done against him. ¹⁴It was as if God had an official list of the debts we owe{, which are our sins}. {When he

forgave us,} he wiped out that list of sins that counted against us, and he prevented it from coming between us and him. God accomplished this when {the Messiah died on the cross, as surely as if} he had nailed the list to the cross. ¹⁵Moreover, God defeated the spiritual beings that rule the world, and he publicly showed {that he defeated them}, just as if he had paraded them around as prisoners. {God did this when the Messiah died} on the cross.

¹⁶Because of these things {that God has done for you}, do not worry about what other people say you should do. {They may have opinions} about what to eat and what to drink. {They may have opinions about} what special days to observe, including days for worshipping God, days for celebrating when there is a new moon, or days for resting. ¹⁷{God used} these things {to} point to what he had planned for the future, which is the coming of the Messiah himself. ¹⁸{You will meet some people} who enjoy pretending to be humble and worshipping angels and who love to talk about {amazing} things that they have seen. They act like they are great—although without good reason, because they think only in human ways. Do not listen to these people who are trying to take away what God has ready to give to you. ¹⁹{These people} are not remaining loyal to the Messiah. It is he who leads the church, just like people's heads lead their bodies. The head directs how the whole body, each and every part, receives what it needs and how it works together. In this way the body grows. Just like that, the Messiah directs the church so that it grows as God wants it to grow.

²⁰It is as if you have died, {because God included you} when the Messiah died. {This frees you} from the spiritual beings that rule this world. So, you should not obey the rules {that these people have given to you}. {Doing so would mean that} you were really still part of this world. ²¹{These rules include commands like these:} “Do not feel {certain things}!” “Do not try {certain foods}!” “Do not take hold of {certain things}!” ²²All such rules concern things that perish when people make use of them. Further, people{, not God,} teach and require {these rules}. ²³Following these rules may seem to be a wise thing to do for people who worship God the way they want to, who pretend to be humble, and who treat their bodies badly {as part of their religion}. However, {following these rules} will not help you stop sinning.

Chapter 3

¹To return {to what I said before}, it is as if God brought you back to life {because he included you} when he brought the Messiah back to life. {Because of this,} I want you to stay focused on what is in heaven, since the Messiah is there. He sits next to God the Father on the throne {and rules everything}. ²I want you to desire what {God has ready for you} in heaven, not what {you could have here} on earth. ³{You should think this way} because it is as if you have died. You are spiritually alive only because God has united you to the Messiah in close relationship with himself, and this cannot be seen {on earth right now}. ⁴You are alive because God has united you to the Messiah. {Therefore,} when {he returns again to earth and} everyone sees him, at that time you will be with him. Then, everyone will see that you too have become glorious {beings like him}.

⁵Because {this is your destiny}, think of the desires you have to do evil things in this world as enemies that you must kill. {The evil things that you might desire include} having improper sex, doing impure things, enjoying wrong emotions, desiring evil things, and wanting more than you need, which is the same as worshiping another god.

⁶Because people have these desires, God is angry with them and will punish them. ⁷You, just like them, used to have these desires to do evil things. {That was} when you acted out these desires. ⁸But now {that you have believed}, you must stop behaving in all evil ways. {These evil ways include} acting in angry ways, being angry with others, desiring to hurt others, talking bad about others, and speaking shameful words. ⁹You must not tell lies to one another. You are not the person you used to be, a person who normally behaved in these evil ways. ¹⁰You are a new person now, {a person} in whom God is working to make you know him more. {You are now a person} who is like God, who turned you into this new person. ¹¹Since {you are all new people}, {it is not important} whether anyone is a non-Jew or a Jew, or whether anyone is circumcised or not, or whether anyone is a foreigner or an uncivilized person, or whether anyone is a slave or not. Instead, it is the Messiah who is most important, and God has united him to all {of you}.

¹²God has chosen you, he has set you apart as his own people, and he loves you. Because of these things and because {you are new people}, you must always behave properly {towards others}. {This includes} caring about them, being kind to them, not being proud, not behaving harshly, and taking a long time to become angry. ¹³You must not easily become irritated with one another. When you blame other people for the things they have done, you must forgive them. You should imitate how the Lord forgave you by {forgiving one another}. ¹⁴Finally, {what is} more important than everything {I have said} so far is that you love one another. By doing this you will unite yourselves together, just as God has called you to do.

¹⁵You must make the peace which the Messiah has given you a primary factor when you choose what to do. {You must do this} because God has chosen you to have peace as he unites you closely together, as closely as if you were one person's body. Also, you must give thanks to God. ¹⁶You must focus completely on the message about the Messiah as you think and act. You must teach and instruct one another very wisely using songs from the Scriptures, songs about Jesus, and songs that the Holy Spirit has given to you. You must thankfully and sincerely sing to God.

¹⁷Whenever you say or do anything, {you should behave} in every situation {as people who} represent the Lord Jesus. Also, you should thank God, {who is our} Father. {You can do this only} because of {the work of} the Messiah.

¹⁸Wives must treat their husbands as the leaders {in their families}, since this is appropriate behavior for those whom God has united to the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands must love their wives and not treat them harshly.

²⁰Children must obey their parents in every circumstance. This pleases God {and is appropriate} for those whom God has united to the Lord. ²¹Fathers must not make their children angry. Otherwise, the children may feel like giving up.

²²Slaves must obey those who are their masters in this world in every circumstance. {They should obey} not just when their masters are watching, which is how those who want to please only humans behave. Instead, {they should obey their masters} sincerely because they treat the Lord with reverence. ²³You must do whatever work you have to do diligently, as if {you were working} for the Lord instead of for merely human masters. ²⁴{You must obey and serve in this way} because you know that the Lord will justly repay you by giving you what he has kept for you. {Remember that} the Lord Messiah is {the real master} for whom you are working. ²⁵{You must remember who the real master is} because God will punish anyone who does wrong in proportion to those wrong actions. {This is because} God does not judge people based on how they look or who they are but on what they have done.

Chapter 4

¹Masters must treat their slaves justly and fairly. {You who are masters must do this} because you know that you too serve a Master{, one who is} in heaven.

²Pray {to God} persistently. Pay attention when you pray, and give thanks {to God}. ³When you are praying, pray for us too. {Pray} that God will make it possible for us to freely proclaim our message, which is the secret about the Messiah that we now share with others. Because {we proclaimed} this message, I am now in prison. ⁴{Pray} that I am able to explain the good news clearly, since this is what God has called me to do.

⁵Behave wisely around those who do not believe in the Messiah. Take advantage of every opportunity {you have to do this}. ⁶{When you talk with them,} you must always speak in a pleasant and interesting way. {When you do this,} you will know the best way to respond to each person.

⁷Tychicus will tell you everything that has been happening to me. {He is} a fellow believer whom I love, who helps me faithfully, and who serves together with me as a man whom God has united to the Lord. ⁸I am sending Tychicus to you {with this letter} because I want you to know how we are doing and because Tychicus will help you live confidently. ⁹{I am sending him to you} with Onesimus, who is a faithful fellow believer whom I love. He is from your group. Tychicus and Onesimus will tell you about everything {that has been happening} here.

¹⁰Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, and Mark, who is Barnabas' cousin, send their regards to you. You already know that you should welcome Mark if he visits you. ¹¹Jesus, whom you may know by the name Justus, also {sends his regards}. These men{—Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus—}are the only Jewish believers who are working with me for the sake of God's kingdom. They have encouraged me {in this work}. ¹²Epaphras, who is from your group {and} who serves the Messiah Jesus, sends his regards to you. He prays earnestly for you very often. {He prays} that God will make you able to be what God has called you to be and to be sure of everything that God wants {you to do}.

¹³{You know that he prays this way for you} because I can personally affirm this about him. {I tell you} that he works very hard for you, for the people {who live} in the city of Laodicea, and for the people {who live} in the city of Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke the doctor, whom I love, and Demas send their regards to you.

¹⁵Give our regards to the fellow believers who live in Laodicea, to Nympha, and to the group of believers {that meets} in Nympha's home. ¹⁶After the person who reads this letter to you finishes it, send {it to Laodicea} so that someone can read it to the group of believers there, too. Also, {ask for} the letter I sent to the believers in Laodicea so that you too can read it. ¹⁷{You must} tell Archippus to make sure that he completes the task that God gave him to do when God united him to the Messiah.

¹⁸I, Paul, send my regards {to you}. I am writing {these last words} myself {instead of having my scribe write them}. You must not forget that I am in prison. {I pray that God will} be gracious to you.

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter}. Silas and Timothy {are with me. We are sending this letter} to {you,} the assembly of believers in the Messiah in the city of Thessalonica, who are united to God the Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. {May God continue to be} kind to you and make you peaceful.

²We pray for you very often. {When we do,} we always thank God for you all. ³We thank our God and Father for the work that you do because you trust {in him}. We thank him for the way that you energetically help people because you love {them}. We thank him for the way that you patiently endure because you confidently expect our Lord Jesus the Messiah {to keep his promises}. ⁴{We also thank God because} we know that he loves you, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, and chose you {to become his people}. ⁵{We know that God chose you,} because when we told you the good news {about Jesus}, it was not only with words, but the Holy Spirit also powerfully worked {through us}. He also strongly assured {us that he had chosen you}. In the same way, you know what kind of people we are, because when we were with you, everything that we did was to benefit you. ⁶As for you, you proceeded to live as we do and as the Lord {Jesus} lived. When you believed the message {of the good news}, people caused you to suffer {because you did that. But even though you were suffering,} the Holy Spirit caused you to rejoice. ⁷Because all of the people who trust {in the Messiah} throughout the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia heard {of how you remained joyful while people made you suffer}, they wanted to also live as you do. ⁸In fact, many people have heard you tell the message about the Lord {Jesus}. Then they also have proclaimed the message to other people who live throughout Macedonia and Achaia provinces. Even beyond that, people who live in many far-away places have heard about how you trust in God. As a result, we do not need to tell people anything {about what God has done for you}. ⁹These same people {who live far from you} are also telling {others} about how you {warmly} welcomed us. They also are telling {others} that you stopped worshiping {non-living} statues of false gods so that you could worship and obey the living God. He is the {only} real God. ¹⁰{They} also {are telling others that you stopped worshiping the false gods} so that you could eagerly wait for God's Son Jesus {to return to earth} from heaven. {As you know,} God resurrected Jesus after he died, and Jesus is the one who will rescue us {who believe in him} at the time when God will punish people {for their sins}.

Chapter 2

¹{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you are well aware that the time we spent with you was quite productive. ²As you know, people in the city of Philippi previously caused us to suffer and abused us, but our God made us courageous to speak his good news to you despite how hard we struggled {against those who tried to stop us from} speaking God's good news to you. ³Certainly, {when} we encouraged you {to believe God's good news, we did} not {try} to convince you to believe an incorrect message. {We were} not selfishly motivated. {We did} not {try} to deceive {you with what we said}. ⁴Actually, we speak God's good news since he has examined us and approved that we are trustworthy to do so. When we speak God's good news, we are not {trying} to please people. Instead, {we are trying} to please God. God is the one who {constantly} examines what motivates us to speak {his good news}. ⁵In fact, when we previously came, we did not try to please you by flattering you. You know this is true. {We are} not greedily motivated, so we did not need to say things to try to hide how greedy we are from you. God confirms that this is true! ⁶{We did} not {hope that} people would honor {us-}not you and not others{-} ⁷{Yet,} we could have made you submit to us, since we are the Messiah's authorized representatives. Instead, we acted as gentle as infants while we were with you. We acted {as gentle} as a {nurturing} mother {who} comforts her own children. ⁸Since we are so fond of you, we delighted to share God's good news with you. Not only that, but {we} also {delighted to share} our own lives {with you}. {This is} because we started to love you {so much}. ⁹Certainly {our} fellow believers, you remember how hard we labored. We kept working during the night and the day. This

was so that we would not have to ask any of you to help us financially. Even though we were working, we {still} proclaimed God's good news to you. ¹⁰Both you and God testify to how faithfully, righteously, and innocently we behaved toward {all of} you who trust {in God}. ¹¹Each and every one of you knows this personally: {we behaved} the same way {towards you,} as a father {behaves towards} his own children. ¹²{We kept} urging and encouraging and testifying that all of you should live the way that God wants his people to live! This is because God {keeps} inviting you to enter his own glorious kingdom.

¹³We also continually thank God for this reason: you accepted God's message when we reported it to you. You did not consider it to be merely a human message. {You accepted} the message as if God sent it himself. And God actually gave us the message to report! {We} also {constantly thank God} that for those of you who trust in him, God is effectively changing you to live like his people should. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵{Unbelieving} Jews in Judea not only killed the prophets {long ago}, but they {recently} also killed the Lord Jesus. They also severely mistreated us {apostles}. These unbelieving Jews also made the Judean believers in the Messiah suffer. Certainly, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you imitated those assemblies of God in Judea that are united to Jesus the Messiah by suffering the same things from your fellow countrymen. God is thoroughly displeased with these {unbelieving} Jews. They are also enemies of the whole human race! ¹⁶The unbelieving Jews keep trying to stop us from telling {God's good news to} those people who are not Jews. This is because the unbelieving Jews do not want God to save those who are not Jews. These unbelieving Jews continue to sin so much that they have almost reached the limit that God will allow. Indeed, when they least expect it, God will punish them at the end {of time}!

¹⁷{Our} fellow believers, being so far away deprived {us} from seeing you for a short time. But, although we were far away from you, we did not become less affectionate {towards you}. We became even more eager and deeply desired to see you in person. ¹⁸Indeed, we wanted to visit you. I, Paul, even {tried to come} two times, but {when we tried to come,} Satan opposed us. ¹⁹We wanted to visit because we are so confident {about your trust in God}. Being in your presence} also makes us joyful. {Since you are so faithful to God,} we are sure we have achieved what God wanted us to do. {Certainly, we are} also {convinced that we will all be together} in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes {again}! ²⁰Because of you, we glorify {God} and rejoice!

Chapter 3

¹So then, when we {felt like we} could not possibly wait any longer, we thought it was appropriate for only Silas and me to stay behind in the city of Athens. ²But, we still sent Timothy {to you}. He works alongside us and serves God by {proclaiming} the good news about the Messiah. {Silas and I sent him} in order to support and encourage you to remain faithful {to God}. ³{We also sent Timothy to you} so that when people afflict us {apostles}, it would not cause any of you to waver {in how you trust God}. You are well aware that {God} determined that people would afflict us {apostles}. ⁴In fact, even while we {apostles} were visiting you, we kept warning you ahead of time. We warned you that God determined for people to afflict us {apostles}. You are well aware that this is exactly what occurred. ⁵Again this is why, when I {felt like I} could not possibly wait any longer, I sent {Timothy to you}. I was concerned} to learn if you were still trusting {in God}. I was concerned that} somehow Satan tempted you {to stop trusting in God}. If you would have stopped trusting in God,} then all of the hard work we accomplished {among you} would have turned out to be useless!

⁶Timothy recently returned to Silas and me from his visit with you. He told us the good news about how much you trust and love {God}. He also told us} that whenever you think about us, it makes you happy. {He told us} how much you desire to visit us. We have that same desire too! ⁷{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, during the whole time people abused and afflicted us—God encouraged us about you. We were encouraged {when learning from Timothy} that you {still} trust {in God}. ⁸Indeed, we feel revived since you continue {to trust} in the Lord {Jesus}! ⁹Indeed, we cannot thank God enough for what he has done for you! {When we pray} to our God, we abundantly rejoice because of {how much} you {trust in him}! ¹⁰We constantly and excessively beg God {that we would be able} to see you in person. {We} also {desire} to help you increase how much you trust {in God}!

¹¹Now, we pray to God our Father, and to our Lord Jesus, that they will allow us to visit you {again}! ¹²{We} pray that the Lord {Jesus} will cause you to increase more and more in how much you love your fellow believer. {We} also pray that he will cause you to excel in loving all people. This is exactly the way we love you! ¹³{We pray that our Lord Jesus} will strengthen how much you desire {to love each other. We pray that our Lord Jesus} will enable you to live in a way that God our Father considers faultless for those who belong to him. {We pray all of these things so that you will be ready} when our Lord Jesus comes {a second time}, bringing all those who belong to him. May it be so!

Chapter 4

¹⁻²{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, here is a summary {of this letter}. Since we are the spokespersons of the Lord Jesus, we urge and encourage you to keep putting into practice what we taught you. This is how it is necessary for you to live and to please God. Then you will excel even more, because you are aware of the commands the Lord Jesus told us to give you.

³Certainly, God wills for you to live in a way that demonstrates that you completely belong to him: {He desires} that you refrain from committing {any} sexually immoral acts. ⁴{God wills} that each one of you only have sexual relations with his own wife. {God wills} that you treat your wives like they belong to God, and to honor them. ⁵{You must not use your wife} to lustfully gratify what you desire. This is because the nations who are not God's people live this way. ⁶{God also wills} that no one violates and takes advantage of {the wife of} his fellow believer in the Messiah like this. This is because the Lord {Jesus} will avenge all these {sexually immoral} acts. The Lord {Jesus} will avenge exactly as we previously said and strongly warned you. ⁷Certainly God does not summon us {believers in the Messiah into his glorious kingdom} for the purpose of impure {living}. Instead, God wills that we live like those who belong to him. ⁸For this very reason, {I warn each one of you. Since God has told us to say these things,} if anyone {continues to} reject what we say, you are not {simply} rejecting a human being. No, you are rejecting God himself! You are rejecting God who {continually} shares his Holy Spirit with all of you!

⁹Now, {about your question,} there is {really} no need {for anyone} to write to {remind} you how fellow believers in the Messiah should act affectionately toward each other. This is because it is certain that you have already learned what God teaches, "love each other." ¹⁰Certainly you are {already} acting lovingly to all the fellow believers in the Messiah who live throughout Macedonia. Yet, our fellow believers in the Messiah, we {want to} urge all of you to excel in loving {each other} even more! ¹¹{We} also {urge you} to aspire to live peacefully. {We urge you} to keep busy with your own matters. {We urge you} to focus on working to earn what you need to live. Do what we already commanded you. ¹²{We urge you to do these things,} so that you can set a good example toward those who do not believe in the Messiah {by how modestly you live.} Then you would not have to depend {on others} to provide what you need {to live}.

¹³Also, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we want you to be aware about {what will happen to} believers in the Messiah who are dead. You should not be like the rest of humanity, which does not believe in the Messiah. They are deeply sad because they do not confidently expect that people will resurrect after death. ¹⁴Certainly, we {apostles} are convinced that Jesus died and resurrected. This is why we also are convinced that God will {resurrect} the dead people who are united to Jesus. Then God will send them back with Jesus {when he returns to earth again}. ¹⁵In fact, what we {apostles} are now telling you is a message from the Lord {Jesus himself}. When the Lord {Jesus} comes again{, all believers in the Messiah will greet him}. First, those {believers in the Messiah} who have {already} died will certainly greet him, and then we {believers in the Messiah} who are still alive. ¹⁶{This is how} the Lord {Jesus} will come down from heaven: the Lord {Jesus} himself will personally give the command {for all to resurrect}. The chief angel will shout. God's trumpet will blast. Then {all} the dead who are united to the Messiah will be the first to resurrect {from the earth}. ¹⁷After that, God will snatch up all of us believers in the Messiah who are still alive on earth so that we can meet the Lord {Jesus} in the air. Both groups of believers in the Messiah will meet together on the clouds. This is how we will remain together with the Lord {Jesus} forever! ¹⁸As a result, you must encourage each other with this message!

Chapter 5

¹{Now I want you to be aware of the timing of our Lord's return to earth} Our fellow believers in the Messiah, we do not {really} need to write {anything} to you about the specific time {of our Lord's return}. ²This is because you yourselves already know accurately about the time when the Lord {Jesus} will come back. You also know that he will come {unexpectedly}, like when a robber comes at night. ³{The Lord Jesus} will come at a time when people are saying, "{We are} safe and secure!" Then, suddenly, God will overwhelm and destroy them! It will be similar to when a pregnant woman cannot escape being overwhelmed by labor pains. In the same way, those people can never escape {when God destroys}! ⁴However, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, you are not people who are unaware of what will happen, like when people are in the darkness. This is why, when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to punish the people who do not belong to him, he will not surprise you as if he were a thief. ⁵{Since} you are all God's children, {you should live ready for Jesus to return to earth}, like people who are in the light or awake during day are aware of what is happening. We are not {Satan's children,} who live unaware of what will happen, like people at night or in the darkness {who cannot perceive as well}. ⁶So, this is why, {as God's children, we must live ready for what will happen. We must} not live unaware of what will happen like the rest of humanity, who are just like people who are sleeping. Instead, we must stay alert and remain attentive, {expecting Jesus to return to earth}. ⁷It is well known that when people are unaware of what will happen, it is {usually} at night, when they are sleeping. And when people get drunk, they are not ready for what will happen. They {usually} get drunk at night, {when they cannot perceive things as well}. ⁸But {we who are ready for the Lord Jesus to return to earth do not live unaware of what will happen like these people. Since} we are ready, we must remain attentive. We must fully arm ourselves {like soldiers}. Faithful love {towards God should cover our chests} like a breastplate. Being confident {that God} will save us {should fully protect our heads} like a helmet.

⁹Since {we are his people,} God did not destine that he would punish us {for our sins}. Instead, he destined that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, would preserve and save us. ¹⁰Jesus died in our place so that we would live {forever} with him. {This is true,} whether we are alive or dead {when he returns to earth}. ¹¹Since this is true, continue to habitually encourage and support each and every one {of your fellow believers in the Messiah}!

¹²Finally, {our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we request that you give recognition to your spiritual leaders who work hard among you, in the same way you would give recognition to the Lord {Jesus}. You should also give them recognition because they continually warn and instruct you {about living like believers in the Messiah should}.

¹³Because {of how hard} they work {for you,} we also request {that} you abundantly love your spiritual leaders by being considerate of them. {We also urge} that you keep living peacefully with each other.

¹⁴{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we now urge that you warn and instruct those who live inappropriately. We {also} urge that you cheer up those who are discouraged. We {also} urge that you support those who are weak. We {also} urge that you live patiently with every one {of your fellow believers in the Messiah}. ¹⁵If someone treats you badly, make sure that you do not treat them badly in return. Instead, whenever {you can,} actively look for ways to kindly treat every {fellow believer in the Messiah}.

¹⁶Be joyful all the time! ¹⁷Constantly pray! ¹⁸Keep giving thanks to God in every situation! Indeed, God desires for all of you who are united to Jesus the Messiah to do all these things.

¹⁹Do not {try to stop} the {Holy} Spirit {from working among you. That would be like someone trying to} extinguish {a fire}! ²⁰{In other words,} do not scorn prophecies {that the Holy Spirit gives to other believers in the Messiah}!

²¹{Instead,} keep evaluating all {of the prophecies and} retain {only} those that prove to be excellent. ²²Refrain from any thing that appears to be wicked!

²³In summary, we pray that God will personally make you live like people who completely belong to him. God is the one who gives his people peace. We also pray that God will preserve you completely innocent for the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah arrives on earth again. ²⁴The faithful God {continually} summons all of you {to live like those who completely belong to him. So, you can be certain that} he will also do {whatever is necessary for you to be able to live like those who completely belong to him}.

²⁵{Our} fellow believers in the Messiah, we also ask that you keep praying for me, for Silas, and for Timothy!

²⁶When you meet together {for worship}, affectionately greet each of your fellow believers in the Messiah in a way that is appropriate for those who belong to God. ²⁷I want you to swear an oath to the Lord {Jesus}, that you will read this letter to all the believers in the Messiah {among you}! ²⁸May our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to} act kindly toward all of you!

2 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, {am writing this letter.} Silas and Timothy {are with me. We are sending this letter} to {you,} the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica, who belong to God our Father and to {our} Lord Jesus the Messiah. ²{May} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah {continue to be} kind to you and {make you} peaceful.

³Our fellow believers, we should thank God very frequently for you{, and we certainly do}! It is very appropriate that we should do this, because you are trusting in the Lord Jesus more and more, and because every one of you is loving each of the others more and more. ⁴As a result, we keep proudly talking about you to the other groups of believers belonging to God. We tell them how you patiently endure {suffering} and how you continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, even though other people continually cause you to suffer.

⁵{We can clearly see that God has made you able to stay faithful to Jesus while people make you suffer.} From that we know that God judges justly, because it means that he considers you to be worthy of being part of his people forever. That is what you are suffering for. ⁶Since God judges justly, he will certainly also cause suffering for those people who are making you suffer. ⁷He will also cause the people who are afflicting you to stop doing it. He will also do that for us. This will happen when our Lord Jesus shows himself to everyone as he returns from heaven with his powerful angels. ⁸Then with blazing fire he will punish those people who have rejected God, those who refuse to accept the good news about our Lord Jesus. ⁹These people will experience the direct result {of rejecting God}. They will be apart from the Lord {Jesus} forever, where they will never know how wonderfully powerful he is, and where they will be always dying. ¹⁰{This will happen} when the Lord Jesus comes back from heaven at the time that God has decided. As a result, all we who are his people will praise him and marvel at him. {You will be there, too,} because you believed us when we told you the things about Jesus that we knew to be true.

¹¹We frequently ask God {to strengthen you spiritually so} that you might praise Jesus like this. We pray that the God whom we worship will make you worthy to be the new people that he has invited you to be. We pray that he will empower you to accomplish every good thing that you want to do because God has inspired you to do it. ¹²We pray this because we want you to praise our Lord Jesus, and we want him to honor you. This will happen because the God whom we worship and our Lord Jesus the Messiah are exceedingly kind to you.

Chapter 2

¹Now {I want to write to you} about the time when our Lord Jesus the Messiah will return and will gather us to himself. My fellow believers, I urge you ²to think calmly about any message that may have come to you that says that the Lord Jesus has already returned to earth. Do not let this kind of message upset you. It does not matter if the message comes from a spirit or if it comes from a person or if it is in a letter that someone claims that I wrote. ³Do not allow anyone to persuade you to believe any such message.

It is not true, because other things {that have not yet happened} must happen before {the Lord returns}. Before the Lord returns, a large number of people will rebel against God. They will accept and obey a certain man who will oppose everything that God has said. (After some time, God will destroy him.) ⁴This man will say that he is greater than everything that people consider to be God and everything that people worship. He will oppose both. As a result, he will even sit {in God's place} in God's temple to proclaim that he himself is God! ⁵I am sure that you remember that I told you all about these things while I was still with you {there in Thessalonica}.

⁶You also know what is preventing this man from showing himself to everybody now. He will not be able to show himself until the time that God has set for him. ⁷Clearly, people are already opposing what God has said, for

reasons that only believers can understand. But someone is preventing this man {from revealing himself} now, and he will continue to prevent this man until God tells him to stop preventing this man. ⁸It is then that God will allow this man who completely rejects God's instructions to show himself to everyone. (In the end, Jesus will return. When this man sees Jesus, this man will become completely powerless. Then the Lord Jesus will speak a command that will destroy this man.)

⁹{But before Jesus destroys this man,} Satan will work very powerfully through this man. Satan will empower this man to do all kinds of supernatural deeds that look like the miracles that God does. ¹⁰This man will be very wicked and will deceive very many people. These people will perish because they did not accept the true message about Jesus as highly valuable, so God will not save them. ¹¹Because these people reject the true message about Jesus, God enables them to think falsely so that they will believe this man's lies. ¹²God does that so that he may justly condemn all those who refused to believe the true message about Jesus, people who instead preferred to do things that are wicked.

¹³But we should always thank God for you, our fellow believers, you whom our Lord Jesus loves. We should do this because God chose you to be among the first people to believe the true message about Jesus. God chose you to be among the first people that he would save and set apart for himself by means of his Spirit. ¹⁴God invited you to belong to him as we proclaimed to you the good news about Jesus so that God might honor you in some of the same ways that he honors our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

¹⁵So, our fellow believers, continue to strongly believe in the Messiah. Continue believing the true teachings that we have passed on to you when we spoke to you and wrote a letter to you.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷God our Father loves us. Because he is extremely kind to us, he will continue to encourage us forever, and we can expect to receive good things from him. We pray that he and our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself will encourage you and make you able to continually do and say every kind of good thing.

Chapter 3

¹This is the last part of what I want to say. Our fellow believers, pray for us that many more people will soon hear the message about our Lord Jesus and honor it, just as you have done. ²Pray also for us that God will keep the many evil people from harming us. As you know, most people are not faithful to the Lord.

³Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is faithful to you! He will make you strong spiritually and he will protect you from Satan, the evil one. ⁴Because you are joined to our Lord Jesus, we are also confident that you are now obeying what we have commanded you, and that you will obey what we are commanding you {in this letter}. ⁵We pray that our Lord Jesus would continue to help you to experience how much God loves you as well as to experience the endurance that the Messiah will give you.

⁶Our fellow believers, accept what we say now as if our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this: we command you to stop associating with every fellow believer who is lazy and refuses to work. These people are not living in the way that Jesus taught us and that we in turn have taught you. ⁷We tell you this because you yourselves know that you should behave just as we behaved. We did not just sit there without working while we were living among you. ⁸That is to say, we did not eat anyone's food if we did not pay for it. Instead, we worked very hard all the time {to support ourselves}. We did that so that we would not have to depend on any of you {for what we needed}. ⁹God has certainly authorized us to receive what we need from his people. But instead of demanding things from you, we worked hard so that you could see how God wants his people to live, and then you could live in just the same way. ¹⁰Remember that when we were there with you, we kept commanding you that if any fellow believer refuses to work, you should not give him food to eat. ¹¹Now we tell you this again, because people have told us that some of you are lazy and not working at all. Not only that, but some of you are interfering with what other people are doing.

¹²Accept what we say now as if the Lord Jesus the Messiah himself were saying this: We command and urge those fellow believers who are not working to mind their own business and to work so that they have what they need to live.

¹³As for you fellow believers who are working hard, do not ever get tired of doing what is right!

¹⁴If any fellow believer does not obey what we have written in this letter, publicly identify that person. Then do not associate with him, in order that he may become ashamed {that he is not working}. ¹⁵Do not think of him as though he were your enemy; instead, warn him as you would warn your other fellow believers.

¹⁶I pray that our Lord, who is the only one who can truly make anyone peaceful, will make you peaceful in every way and in all situations.

I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to help you all. ¹⁷{Now I have taken the pen from my scribe, and} I, Paul, am sending this greeting to you as I write this myself. I do this in all my letters in order that you may know that it is truly I who have sent this letter. This is how I always end my letters. ¹⁸I pray that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to act kindly to you all.

1 Timothy

Chapter 1

¹{From} Paul, a man who represents Jesus the Messiah. This is what God, the one who saves us, and {our} Lord Jesus the Messiah, in whom we hope, commanded me to do.

²You, Timothy, are {like} a true son to me as a fellow believer. May God the Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly and mercifully to you, and keep you peaceful. ³{I urge you now,} just as I urged you when I was going to the province of Macedonia, to remain in the city of Ephesus. Stay there so that you can command certain men there to stop teaching people things that are different {from what is true}. ⁴Instruct them to stop focusing on old useless stories and endless lists of ancestors. Those things {only} cause people to argue with each other. They do not help God's plan to move forward. That happens when we trust in God. ⁵We insist on these things so that {God's} people will love {each other}. They will do this when they desire only what is good, when they know confidently that they are doing the right things, and when they genuinely trust in God. ⁶Some people have rejected these good things. Instead, they prefer to teach useless things. ⁷They desire to be teachers of the laws {that God gave to Moses}, but they do not understand the things that they talk about, nor the things that they insist are true.

⁸But we know that the laws {that God gave to Moses} are helpful if people use them in the right way. ⁹We know that God does not establish laws for people who do what is right, but for people who act as though there are no laws and who refuse to obey anyone. God establishes laws for those who do not honor God and for those who sin, for those who do not revere God and who pay no attention to him. He establishes laws for those who murder their fathers, for those who murder their mothers, and for those who murder other people. ¹⁰{God establishes laws for} people who are sexually immoral, men who have sexual relations with other men, those who kidnap people {and sell them as slaves}, liars, those who are false witnesses {in courts of law}, and every other action that is contrary to {our} true teaching. ¹¹{This teaching} comes from the good news about {our} wonderful God, whom we praise. This is the good news that he gave to me {to announce to others}.

¹²I am grateful to Jesus our Lord the Messiah who enabled me {to do this work}, because he considered that he could trust me. So he appointed me to serve {him}. ¹³Formerly I said false things about him, I caused his people to suffer, and I acted very violently {toward them}. But the Messiah acted kindly to me since I did not know that what I was doing was wrong. I did not know that what I was doing was wrong because I did not believe in him. ¹⁴Our Lord abundantly did {for me} what I did not deserve, allowing me to believe in the Messiah Jesus and to love him as someone who belongs to him.

¹⁵Everyone should trust this statement and accept it completely: "Jesus the Messiah came into the world to save sinful people {so that God would not punish them for their sins}." {As for me,} I have sinned worse than all the others. ¹⁶But this is why the Messiah Jesus acted mercifully to me. Since I am the person who has sinned worse than all others, he used me as an example to show how perfectly patient he is with people. He wanted to show this to the people who would later believe in him and, as a result, would live forever.

¹⁷So let us honor and praise the one who is the eternal king, the one whom no one can see and who can never die! He alone is God. Let us praise him forever and ever! May it be so! ¹⁸Timothy, you are like a son to me. I am telling you to do these things in agreement with what people previously prophesied about you. I want those messages to encourage you to serve God as diligently as a soldier would obey a commanding officer. ¹⁹Continue to trust {in the Lord Jesus} and to do only what you know to be right! Some people have stopped doing this and so have destroyed their relationship with God. ²⁰Among the ones who have done this are Hymenaeus and Alexander. I put them into the control of Satan so that {when Satan makes them suffer} they may learn not to insult God.

Chapter 2

¹Because of those things, the most important thing that I encourage {believers to do} is to {continually} pray to God on behalf of everyone. They should ask God for what they need, and also for what other people need, and they should thank God {for everything that he does}. ²{They should pray} for kings and for everyone who governs {over others} so that we can live peacefully and quietly. {That way we can do} all that God and others consider to be right and proper. ³It is good {to pray like that}, and it pleases God, who saves us. ⁴God desires to save all people. He wants everyone to fully know and accept his true message. ⁵That is because there is only one God {of everyone}, and there is only one person who can bring God and human beings together. That person is the Messiah Jesus, who is human himself. ⁶He willingly died {as a sacrifice} in order to rescue all people {from sin and death}. {He died} at the perfect time, and his death showed {that God desires to save all people}. ⁷It is to declare this message that God has appointed me to speak for him and has sent me to represent him. As surely as I belong to the Messiah, I am telling the truth. I am not lying! {God sent me} to teach those who are not Jews that they should believe God's true message.

⁸Therefore, I want men in every place {where believers worship} to pray {to God}. They should live in a way that pleases God, lifting their hands to pray rather than because they are angry or quarreling {with someone}.

⁹Similarly, {when gathering to worship God,} the women should wear appropriate clothing that is modest and sensible. They should not try to beautify themselves with elaborate hairstyles, or gold jewelry, or pearls, or expensive clothing. ¹⁰Instead, {they should beautify themselves by doing} the things that women who claim to worship God should do. That is, {they should be doing} good things {for other people}. ¹¹Women should learn quietly {from the leaders of the congregation}, remaining subordinate to them at all times. ¹²But I do not allow women to teach men, nor to have authority over men. Instead, women should remain quiet. ¹³After all, God made Adam first, and afterwards he made Eve, ¹⁴and the snake did not deceive Adam. The snake deceived the woman {so that she did what God had told her not to do,} and she become a sinner. ¹⁵But {even though she did that,} God will save women, although {they must still endure the pain of} bearing children, if they continue to trust in God, and to love others, and to live in a way that pleases God, and to behave sensibly.

Chapter 3

¹Everyone should trust this statement: "If anyone aspires to be a leader of the believers, he desires to do a good task." ²For that reason, a leader of the believers must be someone whom no one can rightly accuse of doing anything bad. He must be faithful to his wife. He must not do anything excessively. He must think in wise ways. He must behave well. He must welcome guests into his home. He must be able to teach others. ³He must not be a drunkard and must not be quick to fight. Instead, he must be gentle and must not be quarrelsome. He must not love money. ⁴He must lead and care for his own family well. His children should obey and completely respect him. ⁵After all, if anyone does not know how he should lead and care for the people who live in his own house, he certainly cannot care for the gathering of God's people! ⁶Do not appoint a new believer {to be a leader of the believers}, because he might become proud. Then God would judge him for the same reason as he judged the devil. ⁷A leader of the believers must also conduct himself in such a way that nonbelievers will speak well of him. Then people will not say bad things about him, and the devil will not capture him like an animal in a trap.

⁸In the same way, those who {are appointed to} assist the leaders should be people who are serious and mature. They should be sincere when they speak. They should not drink too much wine, and they must not have a strong desire for money. ⁹They must always believe the message that God has now revealed to us about believing in him, while knowing within themselves that God approves of what they are doing. ¹⁰But {just as you do for the leaders,} you must first examine the way these assistants behave. Then, if you do not find any fault with them, you may let them serve {as assistants}. ¹¹Their wives likewise must be serious and mature, they must not talk badly about people, and they must do everything in moderation. They must be trustworthy in everything that they do. ¹²An assistant must be faithful to his wife, and he must lead and care well for his children and the rest of the people in

his house. ¹³Assistants who serve well will increasingly benefit {from serving in this way} because people will respect them, and they will learn to speak very boldly about what they believe concerning the Messiah Jesus.

¹⁴I hope that I will be able to come to you soon. But I am writing these things to you now ¹⁵in case I am not able to come soon. I want you to know how believers should behave in the family of God, which is the group of all those who believe in Jesus and belong to the living God. The people in this group believe and teach the true message.

¹⁶And everyone must agree that this true message that God has revealed to us is marvelous:

“The Messiah was God who came to the world in a human body.

The Holy Spirit proved that he was genuine.

God’s messengers saw him.

Believers announced who he was to the nations.

People in many parts of the world believed in him.

God powerfully took him up {to himself in heaven}.”

Chapter 4

¹Now God’s Spirit tells us clearly that in these later times some people will stop believing the true message about Jesus. Instead, they will listen to evil spirits who deceive people, and to the false things that these evil spirits teach.

²The evil spirits teach these things through people who lie and only pretend to do what is right. These people do not even feel guilty when they teach false things. ³They prevent people from marrying. They tell them that they must not eat certain kinds of food. But God created that food as something for us to receive from him and to thank him for. He created it for us who believe in him and who know what is true. ⁴Everything that God has made is good. Any kind of food is acceptable to eat if we thank God for it when we eat it. ⁵When we pray to God and believe what he said, {that everything he created was good,} then the food that we eat is acceptable to him. ⁶If you keep teaching these things to your fellow believers, you will be serving Jesus the Messiah well. You will become strong spiritually as you obey the true message that we all believe. That true message is the good teaching that you have been following. ⁷But have nothing to do with the worthless, foolish stories. Instead, train yourself to do the things that please God. ⁸Remember that “training your body helps you a little bit, but learning to do the things that please God helps you in every way. {It is good for you} both as you live now on earth and as you live in the future with God.” ⁹Everyone should trust this statement and accept it completely. ¹⁰For this reason we work as hard as we can, because we confidently expect that the living God will do the things that he has promised. He is the Savior of all humanity, but particularly the Savior of those who believe. ¹¹Teach the believers about these things and insist that they do them.

¹²Do not allow anyone to say that you do not matter because you are young. Instead, show other believers how to live. Show them this by how you speak, how you behave, how you love others, how you trust God, and how you keep yourself sexually pure. ¹³Until I come back to you, be sure to continue reading {the Scriptures to the believers when you meet together}, teaching {the Scriptures to the believers}, and urging {them to obey the Scriptures}. ¹⁴Be sure to use the gift that you have, which God gave to you when the leaders of the church laid their hands on you and told you what God had revealed to them about you. ¹⁵Put into practice all these things {that I have told you to do}! Concentrate on them so that everyone will see how much you are improving {as a follower of Jesus}.

¹⁶Be very careful about the way that you behave and about the things that you teach. Keep doing these things, because God is using them to save not only you, but also the people who listen to you.

Chapter 5

¹Do not speak harshly to a man who is older than you are. Instead, advise him as if he were your father. Advise younger men as if they were your brothers. ²Advise a woman who is older than you as if she were your mother. Advise younger women as if they were your sisters. As you do all of this, you must act in a completely proper way.

³Make sure that {the congregation} takes care of widows who truly have no one else to care for them. ⁴But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these children or grandchildren should first learn that they must take care of their own family. {In this way} they can repay their parents {and grandparents} {for the things that they did for them when they were young,} because doing that pleases God. ⁵A widow who is truly alone and has no one to help her confidently expects that God will help her. So she prays persistently, and she earnestly asks God to help her.

⁶But a widow who lives only to please herself is spiritually dead even though she is still physically alive. ⁷Teach these things as well, so that no one will say that the believers are behaving badly. ⁸But if anyone does not take care of his own relatives, and especially those who live in his own house, he has rejected what we believe. He is worse than a person who does not believe in the Messiah.

⁹Add a widow to the list {of true widows} only if she is at least 60 years old. She also must have been faithful to her husband. ¹⁰People must report that she did good works. They must report that she brought up her children well, that she welcomed strangers, that she humbly served the believers, that she helped people who were suffering, and that she was eager to do all kinds of good works. ¹¹But do not add younger widows {to the list of true widows}. When they feel strong desires, they will change their minds about being devoted only to the Messiah and they will want to get married again. ¹²{When they do this,} they will become guilty of violating the vow that they made at first {to remain as widows}. ¹³In addition to that, they also become accustomed to doing nothing. They go from one house to another house, not only doing nothing {good}, but also talking about people and meddling in other people's affairs. They say things that they should not say. ¹⁴So, {instead of the church adding young widows to the list of true widows,} I prefer for younger widows to remarry and have children. These women should manage their homes well. In that way they will not give the enemy, {Satan,} an opportunity to accuse them of doing wrong. ¹⁵{I write these things} because already some {younger widows} are {no longer obeying the Messiah but instead are} obeying Satan.

¹⁶If any believing woman has widows {among her relatives,} she should help them. In that way, the group of believers will not have to take care of more widows than it is able. The group of believers will then be able to help the true widows {who have no family members to care for them}.

¹⁷The believers should both honor and pay the elders who lead them well, especially the elders who work hard at preaching and teaching {what the Scriptures say}. ¹⁸{We know that this is right} because we read the following in the Scriptures {that Moses wrote}: "While an ox is threshing grain, you must not tie its mouth so that it cannot eat any grain." And {we also know this is right because Jesus said,} "People should pay those who work for them."

¹⁹Only listen to someone who accuses an elder of doing wrong if {at least} two or three people testify about the matter. ²⁰{When you meet to worship,} correct those who sin in front of everyone, so that the rest {of the people} will be afraid {to sin}.

²¹With God and the Messiah Jesus and God's chosen heavenly servants watching me and listening to me, I solemnly call upon you to obey the instructions that I have just given to you. Judge every matter fairly and do not favor one person over another.

²²Do not be in a hurry to appoint someone {as a leader in the group of believers}. If he sins, it will be as though you have sinned, too, so do not do that. You must avoid sinning. ²³Stop drinking only water, {Timothy.} Instead, also drink a little wine to help with your frequent stomach sicknesses. ²⁴When some people sin, everyone knows about it and {knows that God} will judge them {for it}. But when other people sin, no one knows about it until a much later time. ²⁵In the same way, everyone knows about {many of} the good things that people do. But even when people do good things secretly, everyone will find out about them later.

Chapter 6

¹All {believers} who are slaves should honor their masters in every way. Then people will not {have a reason to} speak evil about God or about the things that we teach.

²Also, slaves who have masters who believe in the Messiah should not disrespect those masters because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve their masters even better because those who benefit from their good work are fellow believers in the Messiah, and God loves them. Teach these things and urge {our people to do them}.

³Some people teach things that are not true. They do not accept the reliable message about our Lord Jesus the Messiah. And they do not accept the teaching about how to live in a manner that pleases God. ⁴These people are proud, but they do not understand anything. Instead, they abnormally desire to argue about unimportant matters and about certain words. Their behavior causes them to envy other people. They quarrel with others, they say bad things about others, and they suspect that others have evil motives. ⁵They constantly quarrel with other people. Their whole way of thinking has become completely wrong. They have rejected the true teaching. As a result, they think that the purpose of living in a godly way is to gain material things.

⁶But we do gain great benefit when we live in a godly way and when we are content with what we have. ⁷This is true because we brought nothing into the world {when we were born}, and we are not able to take anything out of it {when we die}. ⁸So if we have food and clothing, we should be satisfied with those things. ⁹But some people strongly desire to be rich. As a result, they do wrong things to get money. Then bad things happen to them, and they cannot escape from them. They foolishly desire many things that will hurt them and, in the end, these things destroy them. ¹⁰You see, people do all sorts of evil things when they strongly desire to have a lot of money. Some people started desiring money and so they stopped desiring to follow Jesus. By doing this, they have made themselves sorrowful in many ways.

¹¹But you, as a man who serves God, must avoid these {evil} things. Instead, decide that you will do what is right, and that you will live to please God. Trust God, and love {others}. Endure {the difficult things that happen to you}. Always be gentle {with people}. ¹²Try earnestly to live according to what you believe, knowing that this is a good thing to do. Make sure that you have the gift of eternal life that God chose for you to have when you openly said before many witnesses that you belonged to the Messiah.

¹³{We are in the presence of} God who gives life to all things. {We are in the presence of} the Messiah Jesus who boldly declared what was true when he was on trial before Pontius Pilate. In their presence, I give you this command: ¹⁴Obey what the Messiah has commanded us. Do not do anything wrong. That way no one will be able to criticize you. Continue to obey until our Lord Jesus the Messiah comes again. ¹⁵God will cause Jesus to come back at the perfect time. We praise God. He is the only Ruler! He is the King over all other kings and the Lord over all other rulers! ¹⁶God is the only one who will never die. He lives {in heaven} in light that is so bright that no one can approach it! He is the one whom no person has ever seen and whom no person is able to see! My desire is that all people will honor him and that he will rule powerfully forever! May it be so!

¹⁷Tell the believers who are rich here in this present world that they should not be proud. They should not trust in their many possessions because they cannot be certain how long they will have them. Instead, tell them to trust in God. He is the one who abundantly gives us everything that we have, and he wants us to enjoy it. ¹⁸Tell these rich believers to do good things. Tell them they should want to do a lot of good works {instead of acquiring a lot of money}. They must be generous {with their possessions} and be willing to share {what they have with others}. ¹⁹{If they do that,} it will be as though they were storing up for themselves many good things for their future life {in heaven}. {Having done all of those good deeds} will prepare them well for the life that God wants to give them. That is the real life. ²⁰Timothy, protect the true message that God has given to you. Avoid people who want to chatter about things that are not important to God. Avoid also people who falsely claim that they have true knowledge, but who say things that oppose the true things that we teach. ²¹Certain people believe these things and have stopped believing the truth about God. May God be kind to you all.

2 Timothy

Chapter 1

¹{From} Paul, a man who represents Jesus the Messiah because this is what God wants {me to do}. I tell others that God has promised that we can live {forever} with the Messiah Jesus. ²To Timothy. I love you as if you were my own son. May God our Father and the Messiah Jesus our Lord act kindly and mercifully to you, and keep you peaceful.

³I serve God just as my ancestors did, because I truly want to do what he wants. I thank God when I pray for you. I always mention you in my prayers at all times. ⁴As I remember how you cried {when we separated}, I really want to see you {again}. Then I will rejoice greatly. ⁵I also remember how you truly believe {in Jesus}. Your grandmother Lois first believed, and then your mother Eunice believed as well. I know that you also truly believe like they do!

⁶Because you strongly believe in Jesus, I remind you to start using again the {spiritual} gift that God gave you. You received this gift {that enables you to do the work that God has chosen you to do} when I put my hands on you {and prayed for you}. ⁷{Use this gift confidently,} because God did not give us his Spirit to cause us to be afraid. Instead, his Spirit causes us to be powerful {as we work for God}, to love {him and others}, and to control ourselves.

⁸So do not be ashamed to tell people about our Lord. Do not be ashamed of me, even though I am a prisoner because I preach about him. Instead, be willing to suffer hardship along with me as you {also} tell others about the good news, because God will empower you {to endure these hardships}. ⁹{He will do this because} he saved us and called us to be a people that he sets apart {as his own}. God did not save us because of any good works that we did. Instead, he saved us because it was his plan to be kind to us even though we did not deserve it. He planned this for us before the world began through what Jesus the Messiah would do for us. ¹⁰Now Jesus the Messiah, the one who saves us, has come. As a result, everyone can know {God's gracious plan to save us}. {Specifically}, Jesus has declared the good news that we will not remain dead after we die. Instead, we will live forever in bodies that will not decay! ¹¹God assigned me to go as his representative to people in order to preach and to teach this good news. ¹²This is the reason that I am suffering here {in this prison}, but I am not ashamed {of being here}, because I know the Messiah Jesus and I trust him. I am convinced that he is able to keep me faithful to him until the day {when he returns}.

¹³Be sure that you tell others the same accurate message that you heard from me. {As you tell it,} keep trusting in the Messiah Jesus and keep loving others as the Messiah Jesus enables you to do so. ¹⁴Protect this good message that God has entrusted to you {for his people}. The Holy Spirit who lives in us will help you {to do that}.

¹⁵You know that almost all the believers in {the province of} Asia {Minor} have left me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶{But} I pray that the Lord will be kind to the family of Onesiphorus, because he often helped me, and he was not ashamed that I am in prison. ¹⁷On the contrary, when he came {here} to Rome, he kept searching for me until he found me. ¹⁸You also remember very well how much he helped {me when I was} in {the city of} Ephesus. {So} I pray that the Lord will be merciful to Onesiphorus on the {final} day {when the Lord will judge everyone}.

Chapter 2

¹So {as for} you, {Timothy,} let the Messiah Jesus strengthen you as he acts kindly towards you. You are like a son to me. ²You have heard my teachings in the presence of many people who can confirm them. {Now you must} carefully teach these things to {some other people. These must be} reliable people who will, in turn, be qualified to teach others.

³Join {me} in suffering as we obey Jesus the Messiah, just as a good soldier must suffer {as he obeys his commander}. ⁴{You know that} people who serve as soldiers, in order to please their commander, do not become involved in civilian occupations. ⁵Likewise, athletes competing in games cannot win unless they obey the rules. ⁶The farmer who works hard should receive his share of the crops first. ⁷Think about what I have just written, because{, if you do,} the Lord will enable you to understand {it} completely. ⁸{As you suffer hardships,} remember Jesus the Messiah, whom God raised from the dead. He is a descendant of King David. This is the good news that I preach. ⁹For this {good news} I have suffered many things, which now include that soldiers have imprisoned me as a criminal. But no one can imprison the message from God! ¹⁰Therefore I willingly endure all that I am suffering for the sake of those whom God has chosen. I do this in order that the Messiah Jesus will save them, too, and that they will be forever with him in his glorious presence. ¹¹You can depend on this message {that we preach}:

“When Jesus died for us, it was as though the old, sinful person that we were also died with him. If we have done that, then we will also live with him.

¹²If we accept the suffering {that comes from obeying Jesus in this life}, then we will also rule {over everything} with him {in the next life}.

But if we say that we do not know him, he also will say that he does not know us.

¹³If we are unfaithful {to Jesus}, he continues to be faithful {to us},

because he cannot be false to himself.”

¹⁴Keep reminding {the believers} about these things {that I have told you}. Warn them that God is listening and that they must not fight over {which} words {are correct for expressing God's message}. Arguing like this does not help anything and can cause those who listen to give up on following Jesus.

¹⁵Do your best to be a person of whom God approves. Be like a worker who knows that he is doing good work as you correctly teach the true message.

¹⁶Stay out of useless conversations that ignore God, because this kind of talk causes people to dishonor God more and more. ¹⁷This way of speaking will spread like an infectious disease. Hymenaeus and Philetus are two examples of men who talk like this. ¹⁸These men believe and teach things that are not true. They {wrongly} say that God has already raised his people from the dead {and will not do so again}. In this way they convince some {believers} to stop trusting {in the Messiah}. ¹⁹However, the truth about God still exists. It is like a firm foundation of a building, on which someone has written these words: “The Lord knows those who belong to him” and “Everyone who says he belongs to the Lord must stop doing wicked deeds.”

²⁰In a wealthy person's house there are not only containers made of gold and of silver, but also containers made of wood and of clay. The owner uses the gold and silver containers on great and honorable occasions. But he uses the wood and clay containers to do ordinary and dishonorable things. ²¹Therefore, anyone who gets rid of what is evil in his life will be like a container that someone has cleaned completely so that the owner can use it for any occasion, even the most special ones. In the same way, when a person gets rid of what is evil in his life, God considers him worthy and can use him to do any good task. ²²So avoid doing the sinful things that young people usually desire. Instead, together with people who worship the Lord sincerely, strive to do things that are right, trust in God and love him and others, and live peacefully with other people.

²³Do not let anyone begin to debate with you about matters that only uneducated and foolish people talk about. You know that when people talk about such things, they begin to quarrel. ²⁴But the one who serves the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, he should be kind to all people. He should be able to teach {God's truth well}. He should be patient with people. ²⁵He should gently instruct the people who argue against him. Perhaps God may lead them to repent {of their wrong thinking} and to know the truth. ²⁶In that way they may think correctly again. They will realize that the devil has been deceiving them and controlling them so that they will do what he wants.

Chapter 3

¹But you need to realize that the final time period {before the Messiah returns} will be very dangerous {for believers}. ²This is because people will love themselves more than anyone else. They will love money. They will boast about themselves. They will be proud. They will insult others. They will not obey their parents. They will not thank anyone for anything. They will not honor God. ³They will not love others. They will refuse to be at peace with anyone. They will slander others. They will not control themselves. They will be brutal toward others. They will hate anything that is good. ⁴They will betray {the ones they should protect}. They will do dangerous things without thinking. They will be proud. They will do what pleases them instead of loving God. ⁵They will maintain the {outward} appearance of being religious, but they will refuse to allow God to actually do his powerful work {within them}. Stay away from such people. ⁶Some of them deceive people into allowing them into their homes, where they begin to control what the foolish women think. These are women who sin continually, and who just do whatever they feel like doing. ⁷Even though these women are always wanting to learn new things, they are never able to recognize what is actually true. ⁸In the same way that Jannes and Jambres{, Pharaoh's magicians,} tried to stop {Pharaoh from believing what} Moses {was telling him}, so do these men also try to stop {people from believing} the true message {about Jesus}. These men are ruined in how they think. {They are not fit to be teachers because} they only pretend to believe in Jesus. ⁹So although they have been able to teach wrong things to some people, they will not continue to succeed, because most others will clearly perceive that these men understand nothing. This will happen to them in the same way that it happened to Jannes and Jambres, when the people realized that they were foolish.

¹⁰But as for you, you know very well what I teach and that is what you teach. You know and imitate my way of living and how I do everything to serve God. You have trusted God as I have. You have seen that I have peace even when I am suffering. You have seen that I love God and the believers. You have seen that I keep on serving God even when it is very hard to do so. ¹¹You have seen people persecute me. You saw what I suffered when I was in {the cities of} Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. {You saw how} I endured the ways that people persecuted me {in those places}, but the Lord enabled me to survive all of those situations. ¹²It is true that people will make all believers suffer who want to live in a way that honors God through their relationship with the Messiah Jesus. ¹³Evil people who pretend {to be believers} will continue to become more and more evil. They will cause people to believe things that are not true, as they themselves believe more and more things that are not true. ¹⁴But you, in contrast, must continue to believe what you have learned and firmly believe. {You can trust that these things are true,} because you know {that} the people who taught you these things {are trustworthy}. ¹⁵{You} also {know that these things are true} because you have known what God says in the Scriptures from the time when you were a child. The Scriptures enable you to understand how God saves us when we trust in the Messiah Jesus. ¹⁶All the Scriptures come from God's Spirit. They are useful for teaching {people the truth about God}. They also help {people} to know when they are wrong and help {them} to understand what is correct, and they are useful for training {people} how to do what is right. ¹⁷In these ways, the Scriptures enable believers who serve God to be fully prepared and to have everything that they need to do every kind of good deed.

Chapter 4

¹{Timothy,} I am now going to solemnly charge you {to do some things, and} as God and the Messiah Jesus see and hear us{, they will also expect you to do them}. {Remember that} the Messiah Jesus is coming to judge all the people who have ever lived. As strongly as you want to see Jesus and to be a part of his kingdom when he comes again to rule as king, I solemnly charge you ²to proclaim the message {about the Messiah}. Be ready to do this when it is easy to do so and also when it is not easy. Correct people when they have done wrong. Warn them {not to sin}. Encourage them to do what is right. {As you do all of these things,} keep teaching them very patiently. ³{I tell you these things because} later on people will not want to listen to accurate teaching. Instead, they will collect as many teachers as they can who will tell them that they can do what they want to do. This is what they will be eager to hear. ⁴So not only will they stop listening to what is true, but instead they will let these teachers deceive

them with foolish stories. ⁵But as for you, Timothy, control yourself no matter what happens. {Be willing to} endure difficult things. Do the work of preaching the good news. Complete the work you must do to serve the Lord.

⁶{I tell you these things} because my life is like a drink offering to God that the priest is almost done pouring out. The time of my death is near. ⁷I am like an athlete who has done his best in a contest. I am like a runner who has finished his race. {By these comparisons, I mean that} I have always continued to obey God. ⁸So{, just like a runner who has won his race,} what remains for me now is {to receive} the prize for having lived in a way that pleased God. The Lord, who judges rightly, has kept this prize for me and he will give it to me when he comes again. He will not only give it to me, but also to everyone who waits eagerly for him to come again. ⁹{Timothy,} try to come to me soon ¹⁰because Demas has abandoned me and has gone to {the city of} Thessalonica. He loves life in this world {too much}. Crescens {has gone} to {the province of} Galatia, and Titus {has gone} to {the district of} Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is still with me. Get Mark and bring him with you. {Do this} because he can help me with the things that I need. ¹²As for Tychicus, I have sent {him} to {the city of} Ephesus. ¹³When you come, bring the outer garment that I left with Carpus at {the city of} Troas. Also bring the scrolls, especially the leather ones.

¹⁴Alexander the metalworker did many evil things to me. The Lord will punish him for what he has done. ¹⁵You also should be on guard against him because he did everything possible to stop us from preaching.

¹⁶The first time I defended myself {in court}, no believers came to support me. They all stayed away. May God not hold them responsible for that. ¹⁷But the Lord was with me. He made me strong, so that I could fully speak his word and so that all the Gentiles could hear it. God saved me from a very dangerous situation as if he had rescued me from a lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil thing that they do. He will bring me safely to where he rules in heaven. May people praise him forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁹Greet Priscilla and Aquila. Greet the people in the home of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus stayed in {the city of} Corinth. As for Trophimus, I left him in {the city of} Miletus because he was sick. ²¹Try your best to come before winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and {many of} the {other} believers {here} greet you. ²²May the Lord be with your spirit{, Timothy}. May he be kind to all of you {believers who are there}.

Titus

Chapter 1

¹I, Paul, {write this letter to you, Titus. I} am a servant of God and a representative of Jesus the Messiah. God sent me to teach the people whom he has chosen as his own to trust him more. I work to help his people to know what is true, so that they can live in a way that pleases God. ²His people can learn how to live like this because they are confident that God will cause them to live forever. Even before the world began, God promised to cause us to live forever, and God does not lie. ³Then, in God's own timing, he communicated his plan through this message that he trusted me to preach. I do this in order to obey the command of God, who saves us. ⁴Titus, you have become like a real son to me because we both now believe in Jesus the Messiah. May God the Father and the Messiah Jesus who saves us continue to be kind to you and keep you peaceful.

⁵I left you on the Island of Crete for this reason: that you do the work that is still unfinished and also appoint elders {for the group of believers} in every city, just as I told you to do. ⁶Now every elder must be someone whom no one can criticize. He must also have just one wife, his children must trust in God, and people must not consider his children to be out of control or disobedient. ⁷Everyone who leads God's people is like the person who manages the servants and property of someone else, but he is doing this for God. So it is necessary for this person to have a good reputation. He must not be proud and he must not get angry quickly. He must not be an alcoholic, not someone who likes to fight and argue, and not a greedy man. ⁸Rather than that, he must welcome strangers and love the things that are good. He must always act sensibly and treat other people in a fair and honest manner. He must always act in a way that is right for someone who is devoted to God and he must always control his emotions. ⁹He must always believe the true things that we have taught him, and he must live according to them. He must do this so that he can persuade people to live like this too, and so that he can correct people if they do not want to live like this.

¹⁰I tell you these things because there are many people who refuse to obey those who are in authority over them. What these people say has no value. They persuade people to believe wrong things. The people who are the most like this are the ones who tell all followers of the Messiah to become circumcised. ¹¹You and the leaders whom you appoint must prevent such people from teaching the believers. They are teaching things that they should not teach, causing entire families to believe wrong things. They only do it so that people will give them money. This is very shameful! ¹²One man of Crete, someone his people thought was a prophet, said, "Cretans frequently lie to each other! They are like dangerous wild animals! They are lazy and always eat too much food." ¹³What he said is true, so correct them forcefully so that they may believe and teach correct things about God. ¹⁴In order to believe correct things about God, they must stop living according to stories invented by the Jews and commandments that did not come from God. These commandments came from people who have stopped obeying what is true. ¹⁵If some people only want to do or think about doing good things, then everything that they do is good. But if people are wicked and do not believe in the Messiah Jesus, everything that they do is bad. Such people's way of thinking has been ruined. They do not even feel guilty when they do what is evil. ¹⁶Even though they claim to know God, what they do shows that they do not know him. They are disgusting. They disobey God and can do nothing good for him.

Chapter 2

¹But as for you, Titus, teach people the things that agree with what you know is true about God. ²Tell the older men that they must control themselves at all times, that they must live in a way that other people respect, and that they must act sensibly. Tell them that they must also firmly believe the true things about God, love others truly, and do all these things even when it is difficult. ³Tell the older women, like the men, to live so that everyone knows that

they respect God very much. Tell them that they must not say mean or false things about other people, and that they must not be addicted to drinking a lot of wine. Instead, they should teach others what is good. ⁴In this way, they will be able to instruct the younger women to love their own husbands and children. ⁵The older women should also teach the younger women to control what they say and do, not to act in a wrong way toward any man, to work well at home, and to do what their husbands tell them. They should do all these things so that no one can mock God's message to us. ⁶As for the younger men, urge them likewise to control themselves well. ⁷You yourself must continually do what is good so that others will see what they should also be doing. When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. ⁸Teach people what is right with messages that no one can criticize. Then, if anybody wants to stop you, other people will shame them because they will have nothing bad that they can justly say about any of us. ⁹As for those believers who are slaves, teach them that they should always submit to their masters. Tell them to live in a way that pleases their masters in every way, and to not argue with them. ¹⁰They must not steal even little things from their masters; instead, they should be faithful to them, and they should do everything in a way that leads people to admire all that we teach about God, who saves us. ¹¹The believers should behave in these good ways because God is offering to save everyone as a gift that no one deserves. ¹²By means of this free gift, God trains us to stop doing what is wrong and what people of the world want to do. He teaches us to be sensible, to do what is right, and to obey him while we live during this present time. ¹³At the same time, God teaches us to wait for what he will certainly do in the future, which is something that will make us very happy: That is, Jesus the Messiah, our Savior and powerful God, will return to us in a glorious way. ¹⁴He gave himself {to die} in our place so that we can be free to live in the way that God wants us to live, and to remove our sin from us so that we can be a special {group of} people who belong only to him, and who eagerly desire to do what is good.

¹⁵{Titus,} speak about these things. Urge {the believers to live as I have described} and correct {them when they do what is wrong,} using your right to command {them if necessary}. Make sure that everyone pays attention to what you say.

Chapter 3

¹Titus, continue to tell our people again that they should obey the people who rule over them. They need to be ready to be helpful whenever they are able. ²They should not say disrespectful things about anyone. They should be peaceful. They should treat everyone gently and as more important than themselves. ³We need to remember that there was a time when we ourselves were foolish and unwilling to obey God. We strongly desired to do things that made us feel good, and so we did those things. But then we discovered that we were unable to stop doing those things. We were constantly envying each other and doing other evil things. We caused people to hate us and we hated each other. ⁴But then when God showed us that he was acting generously to save us because he loves us, ⁵he saved us by removing our sin from us as though he had washed it away. As he did this, the Holy Spirit made us new and enabled us to start living in a new way for God. He did not save us because we do good things, but he saved us because he is merciful. ⁶God generously gave us his Holy Spirit when Jesus the Messiah saved us. ⁷When Jesus freely gave himself for us, God declared that everything was made right between him and us. Because Jesus did that, God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we can share in everything that the Lord Jesus has to give us, especially everlasting life with him. ⁸This is a statement that everyone can trust. I want you to continually emphasize these things so that those who have believed God may constantly devote themselves to doing those things that are good and that help others. These things are excellent and beneficial for everyone. ⁹But many people will want to debate with you about senseless things, such as about lists of Jewish ancestors. They will want to dispute with you about {religious} law and argue with you about many things. Do not engage with them in any of that. Those kinds of things are useless and they do not help you in any way. ¹⁰If someone insists on engaging in these divisive activities after you have warned him one or two times to stop doing it, then have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹because you know that someone like that has rejected the truth; he is sinning and condemns himself.

¹²I plan to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. After one of them arrives, come quickly to me at the town of Nicopolis, because I have decided to stay there for the winter. ¹³Do everything you can to equip Zenas the law expert and

Apollos for their journey, making sure that they have everything that they need. ¹⁴In the same way, make sure that our people learn to occupy themselves with doing good things for people who need help. By doing this, they will be living in a useful way for God.

¹⁵Titus, all those who are with me greet you! Please greet for us everyone there who loves us as fellow believers. May God continue to be kind to all of you.

Philemon

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Paul, am currently in prison for serving the Messiah, Jesus. I am here with Timothy, our fellow believer. {I am writing this letter} to {you,} Philemon. You also serve the Messiah, and we love you. ²{I also write} to Apphia, our fellow believer, and to Archippus, who is {like} a soldier {in the way he serves the Messiah} with us. {I also write} to the group of believers that meets in your house. ³{I pray that} God our Father and our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you all and make you peaceful.

⁴When I pray, I always thank my God for you, {Philemon,} ⁵because {people tell me} how much you trust in the Lord Jesus and how much you love him and all of God's people. ⁶I also pray that as you trust in the Messiah, just as we trust in him, you will understand even more all the good things the Messiah has given to us for serving him.

⁷My dear friend, you have greatly encouraged me and have caused me to rejoice a lot. For you have been encouraging God's people by how much you love them.

⁸So {because you love God's people,} and because {I am an apostle} of the Messiah, I am completely confident that the Messiah would allow me to command you to do what you should do. ⁹But {instead of commanding you,} {because we love each other,} I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner because I serve the Messiah, Jesus, only request {that you do this.} ¹⁰I am asking you do something for Onesimus. He has become like a son to me {since I told him about the Messiah here} in prison. ¹¹He was useless to you in the past, but now he is useful both to you and to me!

¹²Although he is very dear to me, I am sending him back to you. ¹³I wanted to keep him here with me in order that he might serve me in your place, especially while I am still in prison for preaching the good news {about the Messiah.} ¹⁴However, {I am sending him back to you} because you did not tell me I could keep him here. I want you to help me {because you want to help me,} and not because I have forced you to help me. ¹⁵It may be {that God allowed Onesimus} to be apart {from you} during this short time so that he could return to you {as a believer} and be with you eternally. ¹⁶This is because {Onesimus} is no longer just a slave, but he is much more than a slave. For now you can love him as a fellow believer! He is very dear to me, but he is certainly even more dear to you. This is because now he not only belongs to you {as a slave,} but he also belongs to the Lord.

¹⁷So if you consider me to be your companion {in doing the work God has given us,} then welcome Onesimus into your home in the same way you would welcome me. ¹⁸But if he has taken anything from you, or if he is in debt to you for anything, I will repay you. ¹⁹I, Paul, am now writing this in my own handwriting: I will repay you whatever he owes you. I am certain that I do not have to remind you that you owe me {even more than Onesimus might owe you,} {because God saved} your life {when I told you about the Messiah.} ²⁰Yes, my fellow believer, {I am saying what you think I am saying}. I want {you to do this for me} because of what the Lord {did for you}. Give me another reason to be glad that we are both joined to the Messiah.

²¹As I write {this letter} to you, I am sure that you will do what I am asking you to do. In fact, I know that you will do even more than what I am asking you to do.

²²As {you do what I am asking you to do}, I also ask you to prepare to receive me into your home. Because all of you have been praying for me, I confidently expect that {God will allow me to leave prison} and to come to you all.

²³Epaphras, who is {suffering} with me in prison {for serving} Messiah Jesus, says hello to you. ²⁴Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my partners here, {also say hello to you.} ²⁵{I pray} that our Lord Jesus the Messiah will continue to be kind to you. Amen.

Hebrews

Chapter 1

¹In the past, God communicated to the Israelite ancestors through people who proclaimed his message. He did this throughout the time during which the ancestors lived, and he used many different means to do so. ²{However,} when this final time period {began}, God communicated to us through his own Son. God made the world together with him, and God has chosen him to receive everything. ³In God's Son, we see how glorious God is. In fact, God's Son perfectly shows what God is like. By speaking powerfully, he sustains everything {that God has made}. After he purified his people from the wrong things that they did, he ascended into heaven and began to rule with God {his Father}. ⁴{These things about him mean that} he is much greater than the spiritual beings. In the same way, the name that God now calls him is greater than their {names}.

⁵{You can tell that God's Son is greater than the spiritual beings} because God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

"On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father,
and you are my son!"

{He did not say these words about any spiritual being} either:

"I will be his father,
and he will be my son."

{However, he did say these words to his own Son.}

⁶More than that, when God raised his Son into the heavenly world, he commanded:

"All the spiritual beings who serve God must honor and praise him."

⁷God says this about the spiritual beings:

"I have caused the spiritual beings who serve me to be {like} the wind and {like} burning fire."

⁸On the other hand, {God says this} about his Son:

"You who are God will rule forever,
and you will reign justly over your kingdom.

⁹You loved whatever is just, and you hated whatever breaks God's law. Because of that, I, your God, have caused you to be more powerful and joyful than anyone else who is with you."

¹⁰And {God also says this about his Son:}

"You are the Lord, who powerfully created everything that exists when it all began.

¹¹All those things will eventually fall apart,
but you keep on living forever.

They are like clothing that becomes old and wears out,

¹²and you will {remove them and} roll them up as if they were old clothes.

In the same way that a person changes clothes, you will change the things that you created.

In contrast, you are the one who stays the same and lives at all times!"

¹³God did not at any time say these words to any spiritual being:

"Rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies!"

{However, he did say these words to his own Son.}

¹⁴The spiritual beings are all powerful beings who serve God, and God has sent them to help those whom he will soon save.

Chapter 2

¹Because {God did say those things to his Son}, we need to focus most of all on {the good news} that we learned. That way, we do not stop believing it. ²{This is important} because, when the spiritual beings gave the law {to the people of Israel}, what they said was reliable. Further, God justly punished anyone who did not listen to this law or broke it. ³{Since that is true}, God will certainly punish any one of us who ignores the message about how God has acted powerfully to save us. It was the Lord {Jesus} who first spoke this message, and those who listened to him told us the same message reliably. ⁴God also has confirmed to us that this message is true by empowering believers to do powerful and amazing things. Further, he gave the Holy Spirit to believers, to each as God chose.

⁵Now God has not put the spiritual beings in charge of the heavenly world that he will bring to earth. It is that world about which I am talking. ⁶Someone confirmed {what I have said} when he wrote in the Scriptures,

"No humans are worthy enough for you to think about them{, God}!

No human beings are important enough for you to take care of them!

⁷{Despite that,} you created humans to be only slightly less powerful than the spiritual beings, and you have greatly honored and empowered them.

⁸You have put them in charge of everything {that you created}."

When he wrote, "put them in charge of everything," that means that there is nothing over which they are not in charge. However, at this present time, we do not observe that humans are in charge of everything. ⁹However, we do observe Jesus. He is the one who was less powerful than the spiritual beings for a short time, and God has {now} greatly honored and empowered him. God did this because Jesus died. In this way, God graciously had him die for all people {who believe in him}.

¹⁰{Working in that way} was appropriate for God, who created and directs everything {that exists}. When Jesus began to make glorious everyone who believes in him, who are {like} his own siblings, God used how Jesus suffered to make him able to save them. ¹¹Jesus, who sets his people apart for God, and those same people whom he set apart for God, all come from God himself. So, Jesus does not hesitate to refer to them as his own siblings. ¹²{Jesus calls them his siblings} when he says,

"I will declare to my siblings what you are like{, God};

I will praise you when people gather together {to worship you}."

¹³{Jesus says} further:

"I will rely on him."

And {Jesus says} further,

"Look at me and God's children whom he has entrusted to me."

¹⁴So, because God's children are human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. {He did that} so that he, by dying, could defeat Satan, who uses the fact that people die to control them. ¹⁵{When he did that,} he got rid of the way that dying makes us afraid while we live. ¹⁶{Jesus became a human being,} because he came to help those who belong to Abraham{, the ancestor of the Israelites}, not to help spiritual beings, as you know.

¹⁷Because that {is why he came}, Jesus needed to be exactly like us, who are his siblings. That way, he can be the ruling priest who serves God in a compassionate and trustworthy way, so that God forgives what his people did wrong. ¹⁸{Jesus can be that kind of priest} because he endured painful things and experienced how doing what is wrong seems to be good. So, he can aid everyone who also experiences how doing what is wrong seems to be good.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, God has set you apart for himself, and he has summoned us together from heaven. Since {I have told you what Jesus has done,} you should think about him. God sent him to us, and he is the ruling priest in whom we say we believe. ²He faithfully served God, who made him {a ruling priest}. {He is} like Moses, who also {faithfully served God} as part of God's people. ³⁻⁴Now each building has a builder who made it, and people rightly praise the builder more than {they praise} the building. Similarly, God is the builder who made everything. Therefore, people should praise Jesus{, who is God,} more than {they praise} Moses{, whom God made}. ⁵Moses faithfully served God as one who helped all God's people. In that way, he already proclaimed what God says now {about Jesus}. ⁶But the Messiah is God's Son, who {faithfully} rules over God's people. As long as we persist in boldly and proudly expecting {what God will give us}, we belong to those same people.

⁷Since {we are God's people}, {we should do} what the Holy Spirit says:

"This day, when you hear the Father speak {to you}, ⁸do not stubbornly disobey him. {That is what your ancestors did} when they rebelled against God and provoked him while they lived in the wild places. ⁹{While they were} in those places, your ancestors provoked God to see what he would do. {They did that} even though they saw all the amazing things that he did {for them} ¹⁰during a period of 40 years.

So, he was angry with those people, and he said about them, 'They want to do what is wrong all the time. They do not understand how I want them to behave.'

¹¹So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, 'They will never participate in how I rest!'"

¹²Fellow believers, pay attention! Make sure that none of you think in evil and unbelieving ways that would lead you to become disloyal to the only real God. ¹³Rather, you should encourage each other {to be loyal to God} daily, during every day that we call "this day." That way, none of you sin and thus deceive yourselves, which would make you unable to obey God. ¹⁴{You should encourage each other,} because we share {in everything} with the Messiah. {That is true} as long as we persist in trusting him, from when we began to do so until we die. ¹⁵{You should encourage each other} while the Holy Spirit says,

"This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, do not stubbornly disobey him. {That is what your ancestors did} when they rebelled against God."

¹⁶Now you know that it was all God's people, whom Moses led out of the land of Egypt, who listened to God speak and still rebelled against him. ¹⁷You know that it was God's people, who did what was wrong, with whom God was

angry for a period of 40 years. They died in the wild places. ¹⁸You know that it was God's people, who did not obey him, to whom he solemnly declared that they would never participate in how he rests. ¹⁹So, we can tell that they could not participate {in how God rests} because they did not trust {in him}.

Chapter 4

¹So, {we can tell that} God still promises that his people will participate in how he rests. Because of that, we need to make sure that every one of you really receives {what God has promised}. ²{We need to make sure of this,} because we heard the good news just like they did. However, because they were not among those people who believed in what they heard, what they heard did not help them. ³{That is} because {only} we who believe {in the good news} participate in how God rests, {but those who do not believe do not participate in it}. As the Holy Spirit says, "So then, because he was angry with them, he solemnly declared, 'They will never participate in how I rest!'"

{God said this} even though he stopped working {and rested} after he created the world. ⁴{You know that God rested} because of what the Holy Spirit says elsewhere about the seventh {day of the week}. {He says,}

"Then, when {it was} the seventh day {of the week}, God finished working {to create everything}, and he rested."

⁵But {note} again {what God says about the Israelite ancestors} in the words that I already quoted:

"They will never participate in how I rest!"

⁶So then, the Israelite ancestors who heard the good news in the past did not obey God, and so they did not participate in how God rests. However, God still wants some people to participate in how he rests. ⁷{Because of that,} the Holy Spirit once more picked a time {when we can participate in how God rests}. {That time is} what we call "this day." {He did this} when he spoke through David a long time after {the Israelite ancestors disobeyed}. He said, as I have already quoted,

"This day, when you hear God speak {to you}, do not stubbornly disobey him."

⁸So, the Holy Spirit refers to a different day {when God's people can participate in how God rests} that comes after the day {when Joshua led the Israelite ancestors into the land that God had promised them}. This means that {when Joshua did that,} he did not help them participate in how God rests. ⁹So, as you can see, God's people can still participate in how God rests, {just as people rest on} the Jewish day of rest. ¹⁰In fact, the people who participate in how God rests also finish what they are doing and rest. {They do this} just like God finished {creating everything} and rested. ¹¹Because of all that, we should focus on participating in how God rests. That way, none {of us} disobeys {God} like the Israelite ancestors did.

¹²{You need to pay attention to these things,} because what God speaks {is like a person who} lives and does things, including discerning what people think and plan. {It does that as if it were} a sword with two very sharp edges that could cut apart people's bones from their tendons and that could divide up people's inner lives. ¹³God knows everything about every person and thing. Nothing that he created can stay secret when he wishes to examine it. He is the one about whom we are talking.

¹⁴So, a powerful ruling priest works for us, one who ascended through the heavens. He is Jesus, God's Son. Because of that, we need to persist in believing what we say we believe. ¹⁵Now the ruling priest who works for us can very well understand how weak we are. In fact, he experienced many times how doing what is wrong seems to be good, just like we do. However, he never sinned. ¹⁶So then, we should boldly go closer to God, who rules graciously. That way, he will act mercifully and kindly toward us when we need him to help us.

Chapter 5

¹When God appoints a person to be a ruling priest, he selects that person from a group of people in order to serve God for that group. The ruling priest then presents {to God} what people give or sacrifice to take away sins. ²{Every ruling priest} is weak. Because of that, he can act patiently toward those who do not know much about God and toward those who believe and do what is wrong. ³Further, because {each ruling priest is weak}, God requires him to present a sacrifice to take away his own sins, just like {he presents sacrifices} to take away {the sins of} the rest of the people {of Israel}. ⁴Now people cannot decide to become honorable ruling priests on their own. Rather, God chooses {each person who will be a ruling priest}, just like {he chose} Aaron{, the first ruling priest}.

⁵Similarly, the Messiah too did not decide to become a glorious ruling priest on his own. Rather, God the Father {chose him to be a ruling priest} when he said to him,

"On this day, I have declared to everyone that I am your father, and you are my son!" ⁶Similarly, {as you can read} in another Psalm, God the Father said {to the Messiah}:

"You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest."

⁷When the Messiah lived with us before he died and came back to life, he often prayed powerfully and sorrowfully to God. He did this because God could rescue him when he died. Because he honored God, God listened to him {and made him alive again}. ⁸Although he is God's Son, he learned what it means to obey God when bad things happened to him. ⁹Then, when God finished making him able to do so, the Son became the one who saves forever every person who does what he requires. ¹⁰{He did that} after God appointed him to be a ruling priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

¹¹We have many things to talk about with regard to Melchizedek. However, since you do not listen {and understand} well, these things will be difficult to explain {to you}. ¹²{You have believed in the Messiah} for long enough that you should be teaching others {about God}. Instead, though, someone still has to teach you simple things about what God says. You are like babies who have to drink milk rather than being like adults who eat food. ¹³All people who know very little about what is right {and what is wrong} are like people who drink only milk. In fact, they are like babies. ¹⁴On the other hand, people who know much about God are {like adults who eat} food. These people have consistently practiced how to recognize and then distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter 6

¹Therefore, we need to learn more so that we become mature. We should not continue to focus on only the most basic things about the Messiah. {In other words,} we do not need to learn again about how to stop doing useless things or about how to trust in God. ²{We should not} learn {again} about different ways to baptize people, about putting our hands on others {to help them}, about how those who have died will live again, or about how God will finally decide whether people are guilty or innocent. ³At this time, as long as God wants {us to do so}, we will indeed {learn more so that we become mature}.

⁴{Let me tell you about something} that cannot happen. {Think about} people who learned about the good news at one time. They experienced what God gives {to his people} from heaven, and they received God's Spirit. ⁵They experienced how good are the things God says,, and {they have already begun to experience} the powerful things that God will do when he renews the world. ⁶{Think about what would happen} were these people to stop believing the good news. {In that case,} they cannot repent and believe again. {That is because what they did} is like selfishly crucifying and humiliating God's Son. ⁷{Here is an example:} God blesses any field where, once rain falls on it, crops grow that people use. ⁸However, when a field produces plants that are useless, it helps nobody, and God will soon curse it. In the end, someone will set fire to it {to burn up all the useless plants}.

⁹Even though I have warned you in this way, fellow believers whom I love, I am sure that you are believing more firmly {than I have implied}. {In fact, I am sure that} God has saved you. ¹⁰Indeed, since God always acts justly, he will not overlook how you act and how you love {others}. You have proved that you do these things to honor God, particularly when you have helped and continue to help God's people. ¹¹I greatly desire that you all, until you die, continue to focus diligently on fully trusting {that God will give to you} what you confidently expect. ¹²That way, you will not be lazy. Instead, you will do what other believers have done: they have received what God promised them, because they trusted in him and waited patiently.

¹³When God said that he would do something for Abraham, he guaranteed it himself. {He did that} because every other person who could guarantee it is less powerful {than God}. ¹⁴{Here is what} he promised {to Abraham}: "I will definitely bless you, and I will definitely give you many descendants." ¹⁵Because {God guaranteed what he promised}, and because Abraham persevered in expecting it, God gave him what he had promised, {a son}.

¹⁶Now, people have someone who is more powerful than they are guarantee {what they promise}. In fact, when someone guarantees what he or she promises in this way, it definitively concludes whatever people are arguing about. ¹⁷In a similar way, God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to those who would receive what he promised that he would not change what he intended to do. So, he guaranteed what he promised, {just like humans do}.

¹⁸So, God both promised and swore an oath, and he will not lie about or change either of these things. {He did that} for us, who have trusted in him to save us. In this way, he encourages us to persist in confidently expecting what he is ready to give us. ¹⁹When we confidently expect {what God will give us}, it is as if an anchor holds us very securely {so that we do not waver from trusting God}. Further, {when we confidently expect what God will give us}, it is as if we had gone into the inner part of the {heavenly} sanctuary, behind the cloth hanging{, and already received it}. ²⁰{That is the same place} where Jesus went {to serve God} for us and to open the way for us. {He went there} after he became a ruling priest who will always {serve God}, in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest.

Chapter 7

¹{Now I will say more about} Melchizedek. He ruled {the city of} Salem, and he served the greatest God as a priest. When Abraham was going home after defeating some of his enemies, Melchizedek met with him and blessed him.

²Then Abraham gave to him one tenth of everything {that he took when he defeated his enemies}. {The name "Melchizedek"} means "just king" {in Hebrew}. {The title} "ruler of {the city of} Salem" means "peaceful ruler," {since "Salem" sounds like the Hebrew word for "peaceful"}. ³{When Moses wrote about Melchizedek, he did not say anything about} his father, his mother, his other ancestors, when he was born, or when he died. So, {Moses} described him as if he were similar to God's Son and as if he always served as a priest.

⁴You can tell how important Melchizedek was from how Abraham, the ancestor of all the Israelites, offered him one tenth of the most valuable things {that he took when he defeated his enemies}. ⁵In Moses' law, {God spoke to} the men who are part of the clan of Levi and who serve as priests. He commanded them to receive one tenth of what the rest of the Israelites, who are their relatives, {earned or grew}. {God commanded this} despite the fact that all the Israelites are descendants of Abraham. ⁶Now Melchizedek is not part of the clan of Levi. Despite that, he received one tenth of what Abraham {took when he defeated his enemies}. Further, he blessed Abraham, the man to whom God had promised {that he would give him many descendants}. ⁷Now everyone agrees that more important people bless less important people. {So, because he blessed Abraham, Melchizedek is more important than Abraham.} ⁸In Moses' law, we learn about how priests receive one tenth {of what the rest of the Israelites earn or grow}, but these priests all die. In the story about Melchizedek, we learn that he {also received one tenth of what Abraham took from his enemies}, but he continues to live. ⁹In fact, in a way, Levi {and the priests from his clan} gave one tenth {of what they had to Melchizedek} when Abraham {gave him one tenth}. {This is true even though} they are the ones who receive one tenth {from what the Israelites have}. ¹⁰{What I have said makes sense} because Levi {had not yet been born} and was{, in a way,} still inside Abraham, his great-grandfather, when he and Melchizedek met together.

¹¹Now God made the law that he gave to the Israelites depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests. So, suppose that people could become what God wanted them to be through what these priests did to serve God. {In that case,} God would never have appointed another priest to serve in the way that Melchizedek was a priest instead of in the way that Aaron was a priest. {However, God did appoint this kind of priest.} ¹²{You can tell that God made the law depend on having the descendants of Levi serve as priests,} because the law must change whenever the way that people serve as priests changes. ¹³{You can tell that God has changed how people serve as priests,} because Jesus, whom God has called {a priest}, is not one of the descendants of Levi but is a descendant of one of Levi's brothers. No descendant of this man has served as a priest. ¹⁴In fact, we all know that our Lord {Jesus} is a descendant of {Levi's brother} Judah, and Moses did not write down anything about descendants of Judah serving as priests. ¹⁵Further, {you can tell} even more clearly {that God has changed how people serve as priests,} since God has appointed a different kind of priest{, Jesus,} who serves God like Melchizedek did. ¹⁶He serves as a priest because nothing can keep him from living, which makes him a powerful {priest}. {As this kind of priest,} he does not depend on what God commanded in Moses' law about how human priests {are descendants of Levi}. ¹⁷{You can tell that this is true about him}, because God the Father said {to him}:

"You will never stop being a priest in the same way that Melchizedek was a priest."

¹⁸What this means is that God withdrew what he had first commanded {about priests}. {He did this because} that way of doing things was ineffective. ¹⁹{That way was ineffective} because people could not become what God wanted them to be by doing what God previously commanded. Now what this also means is that God provided something better for us to confidently expect. When we confidently expect this, we go closer to God.

²⁰⁻²¹Now God did not guarantee what he said when he made some of the descendants of Levi to be priests. However, he did guarantee what he said {when he made} the Messiah {to be a priest}. Here is what God said to him:

"The Lord has guaranteed what he says,

and he will not do something else:

"You will never stop being a priest!" So, just as {Jesus serves as a greater priest because} God guaranteed what he said {when he made him a priest},

²²so also there is a better agreement, which Jesus guarantees.

²³Further, each one {of the descendants of Levi} died and so could not continue {to serve as a priest}. Because of that, there have been many {descendants of Levi} who have served as priests. ²⁴However, Jesus will never die. Because of that, he will always serve as a priest. ²⁵Because {he always serves as a priest}, he can fully rescue anyone who, because of what he has done, goes closer to God. {He can do that because} he will never die and thus can always ask God to help them.

²⁶Jesus is exactly the kind of ruling priest that we need. He honors God, he does not think about what is evil, and he does not do what would defile him. He is not one of the people who sin, and he now lives in the highest heaven.

²⁷Now each {descendant of Levi who serves as a} ruling priest has to present sacrifices {to God} every day. First, he presents a sacrifice to take away his own sins, and after that he presents a sacrifice to take away the sins of the rest of the Israelites. However, Jesus {took away everyone's sins} when he presented himself {as a sacrifice} one time, so he does not need {to present many sacrifices}. ²⁸In the end, God commanded through Moses that some people should serve as priests, but these priests are weak {and die}. In contrast, when God guaranteed what he said, which he did after he had commanded {those things through Moses}, he enabled his Son {to serve} always as the most effective {priest}.

Chapter 8

¹Here is the main idea that I am writing about: a ruling priest like the one I have described is serving for us. He has gone to be with God {the Father} in the heavenly places, and he has begun to rule. ²He serves in the Most Holy Place and in the most real sacred tent. The Lord {God}, not any human, made {this sanctuary}.

³Now God makes people ruling priests so that they can present sacrifices. Because {that is what ruling priests do}, Jesus too needed to present a sacrifice. ⁴So, because the priests {who are descendants of Levi already} present sacrifices {on earth} as God commanded, Jesus would not be serving as a priest were he on earth {right now}.

⁵Those priests do what God requires {in a sanctuary that} models the heavenly {sanctuary}. {You can tell that this is true,} because God revealed it to Moses when Moses was going to have the Israelites construct the sacred tent. {At that time,} God spoke to him, "Make sure that everything {about the sacred tent} matches the original {sanctuary} that I revealed to you {when you were with me} on Mount Sinai!" ⁶But here is what is true {about Jesus}: he serves in a much better way {than the descendants of Levi do}. In the same way, the agreement that God has made with his people through Jesus is greater {than the agreement that God made with the Israelites}. That is because God promised greater things when he made this new agreement.

⁷Now {you can tell that} the agreement that God made with the Israelites was not perfect, because God chose to make another agreement. ⁸{You can tell that the first agreement was not perfect,} because God declared that the Israelites did not perfectly keep that agreement when he said,

"Here is what I say to you: Pay attention!

Soon I will make a new agreement

with all my people from both the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.

⁹{That agreement will} not be like the agreement

that I made with their ancestors

when I lovingly delivered them

from the land of Egypt.

Here is what I say:

{It will not be like that agreement,} because they did not keep it,

so I abandoned them.

¹⁰This is the kind of agreement

that I will make with my people, the Israelites,

very soon.

Here is what I say:

I will enable them to understand and obey my laws.

I will be the God whom they worship,

and they will be the people whom I care for.

¹¹No one will ever have to instruct another Israelite,

'Trust and worship the Lord God.'

{That is} because all my people will trust and worship me,
no matter how important or unimportant they are.

¹²{That will happen} because I will mercifully forgive them for the wrong things that they have done.

I will never again punish them for the sins that they have committed.”

¹³When God uses the word “new,” he means that the earlier {agreement with the Israelites} is now old. Further, what is old will soon cease to exist.

Chapter 9

¹As for the earlier {agreement that God made with Israel}, it required people to worship God in a specific way in a sanctuary on earth. ²The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was a sacred tent {that had two sections}. They called the outer section the Holy Place. In it, {they put} a stand for lamps and a table on which they laid out {special} bread. ³The inner section was on the other side of an inner cloth hanging. They called this {inner section} the Most Holy Place. ⁴In it, they put the altar for incense and the sacred chest, both of which they completely coated with gold. In the sacred chest, {they put} a gold container with manna inside{, the food that God gave the Israelites while they lived in the desert}. {They also put in it} Aaron’s staff that God caused to produce leaves. {They also put in it} the stone slabs {on which Moses wrote the most important parts} of the agreement with God. ⁵On top of the sacred chest, {they put two statues of} glorious spiritual beings with wings. {These statues} cast shadows on the lid for the sacred chest. {However,} now is not the right time to carefully discuss each of these objects.

⁶After they had set up all those things, the priests went into the outer section of the sacred tent every day to serve God. ⁷On the other hand, on only one day a year does the {current} ruling priest go into the inner section {of the sacred tent}. He has to take blood {from an animal with him}, which he presents {to God} to take away his own {sins} and the sins that the rest of the Israelites committed by accident. ⁸The Holy Spirit shows {through what the priests do in the sacred tent} that God did not reveal how to enter the {heavenly} Most Holy Place during the time when he required people to use the first section of the {earthly} sacred tent. ⁹This {first section of the earthly sacred tent} figuratively describes the time in which those Israelites lived. In that time, priests presented offerings that could not enable the people who brought the offerings to distinguish properly between what is right and what is wrong. ¹⁰They also followed rules that were only about bodily things, {including rules} about what to eat and drink and how to wash with water often. God gave them these rules to follow until he made a new agreement with his people.

¹¹In contrast, when the Messiah began to serve as a ruling priest, {he gave us} the good things that we now have. He passed through the {heavenly} sacred tent that functions better {than the earthly one}. God, not humans, made this sacred tent, and it does not belong on the earth. ¹²Then, when he went into the {heavenly} Most Holy Place only one time, he did not present blood from animals that someone sacrificed{, like the priests who are descendants of Levi do}. Instead, he presented his own blood and freed {his people} from their sins forever. ¹³Now {those priests present} blood from animals that someone sacrificed, and they scatter ashes from a female cow, which they have burned, on unclean people. {When the priests do these things,} they really do cleanse the outside of a person. ¹⁴{Since that is true,} what the Messiah does with his blood cleanses people much more! He presented himself as a perfect sacrifice to God, and the Spirit who lives forever enabled him to do so. He cleanses the inside of you all, removing what you do that accomplishes nothing and enabling you to do what the only real God requires.

¹⁵Because {the Messiah cleanses the inside of people}, God has made a new agreement through him. That way, God gives to those whom he chose what he promised that they would receive forever. {That can happen because Jesus} died to free {his people} from what they did wrong when they disobeyed the agreement that God made with Israel.

¹⁶Now when someone sets up a will, {which is a type of agreement,} that person needs to die before the will becomes effective. ¹⁷In fact, every will is valid only because of a dead person. {That is} because a will is not effective while the person who set it up is alive. ¹⁸Much like that, God definitely required {the Israelites to use} blood when he made the agreement with them. ¹⁹Indeed, after Moses declared everything that God commanded in his law to the Israelites, he picked up {a bowl containing} blood from animals that someone had sacrificed. Then, also using water, red cloth, and parts of a hyssop plant, he scattered the blood on the book {in which he wrote what God commanded} and on all the Israelites. ²⁰{When he scattered the blood,} he said to them, "This blood signifies {that} the agreement that God made with you {is now effective}." ²¹Moses likewise scattered blood on the sacred tent and on every tool {that the priests used} to serve God. ²²Further, God commanded in Moses' law that the priests should use blood almost every time they cleansed {people or things}. In fact, God does not forgive anyone unless a priest presents blood {from an animal that someone has sacrificed}.

²³So then, the priests had to sacrifice animals to purify the {earthly} copy of the heavenly {Most Holy Place}. Much like that, {Jesus had to} present an even greater offering {to purify} the heavenly {Most Holy Place} itself. ²⁴{When he presented that offering,} the Messiah went into the highest heaven, where he reveals himself right now before God to help us. He did not go into a Most Holy Place that humans have made, which is a model of the most real Most Holy Place. ²⁵Further, he {went into the highest heaven} to present himself as an offering only once. That is not what the {earthly} ruling priests do. They go into the Most Holy Place every year {and present} blood from an animal {that someone has sacrificed}. ²⁶{If Jesus had actually needed to present himself as an offering more than once,} then he would have needed to die very often since the time when God created everything. But here is what is true {about Jesus}: during this final time period, he presented himself one time only as an offering to make sin powerless. ²⁷Humans will each die one time only, and then God will decide whether they are guilty or innocent. ²⁸Much like that, the Messiah presented himself one time only as an offering to take away many people's sins. Then, he will come again {to earth}, not {to take away} sins, but to rescue his people, who are persistently expecting him.

Chapter 10

¹The law {that God gave through Moses} is not itself one of the wonderful things that God will give to his people. Rather, it only points to those wonderful things. So, even though the people who go closer to God always present offerings year after year, doing so never enables them to be what God wants them to be. ²Suppose that {those offerings} actually purified the people who worship God. {In that case,} they would never feel guilty about their sins, and they would stop presenting offerings. ³But {here is what is true about those offerings}: they remind people year after year of their sins. ⁴{Those offerings can only do that,} because blood from animals that someone sacrificed cannot remove people's sins.

⁵That is why, when the Messiah came to earth, he spoke {to his Father},

"You did not want {people to present} offerings.

Instead, you made a human body ready for me.

⁶You did not enjoy the sacrifices

that people present to take away their sins.

⁷So, I spoke {these words}: 'Here I am!

Someone wrote about me in the Scriptures.

I will do what you want {me to do}, my God.'"

⁸Here is what the Messiah said {to God} first: "You did not want or enjoy the offerings {that people present} or the sacrifices that people present to take away their sins." Those offerings and sacrifices are the ones that the Israelites

present {to God} as he required in the laws {that he gave through Moses}. ⁹Then, the Messiah said this second: "Here I am! I will do what you want {me to do}." He abolishes {what he spoke about} first in order to set up {what he spoke about} second. ¹⁰Here is what God wanted: Jesus the Messiah presented his body as an offering one time only, and by that {offering}, God set us apart for himself.

¹¹Now all {earthly} priests have to stand up day after day while they worship God and present many offerings of the same kind. These offerings cannot remove {people's} sins. ¹²In contrast, the Messiah presented a single offering that is always effective in taking away sins. Then, he went to be with God {the Father}, where he sits {on the throne} and rules. ¹³Right now, he remains {there} until God defeats all of his enemies. ¹⁴{The Messiah remains there,} because he presented a single offering, by which he always makes the people whom God is setting apart for himself to be what God wants them to be.

¹⁵God's Spirit too confirms to us {that this is true}. Here is what he said first {in the words that I have already quoted}:

¹⁶"This is the kind of agreement that I will make with them,

very soon. Here is what I say:

I will enable them to obey

and understand my laws."

¹⁷Then{, God's Spirit said this second in the words I have already quoted}:

"I will never again punish them

for the sinful and disobedient things that they have done."

¹⁸When God forgives people for the {sinful and disobedient} things that they have done, no one again presents sacrifices to take away sins.

¹⁹So then, fellow believers, we can be totally sure that there is a way into the heavenly Most Holy Place {for us}, because of Jesus' blood. ²⁰Jesus established that new and effective way for us, which passes through the cloth hanging {into the Most Holy Place}. This {cloth hanging figuratively} represents Jesus {while he lived} on earth.

²¹Further, {the Messiah is} a ruling priest {who} works for us, God's people. ²²{Because those things are true,} we should go closer {to God}, completely serving him and fully believing in him now that he has purified us on the inside and on the outside so that we no longer feel guilty about evil things {that we have done}. ²³{God,} who promised {these things to us,} will do what he has said. So, we need to persist in fully believing what we say we confidently expect. ²⁴Further, we need to think about each other, particularly how to encourage each other to love others and to do what is right. ²⁵{We can do that by} always continuing to gather together {to worship God} and encouraging each other, even though some people often do not {do this}. Since we know that Jesus is coming back soon, we should be very eager to do those things.

²⁶{We should do all those things,} because whenever we intentionally and habitually sin once we have completely understood the true {message about Christ}, no one can present any offering that will take away our sins. ²⁷{If we did go on sinning}, all we could do is fearfully wait for God to declare us guilty and, soon after, forcefully punish us as his enemies, {which would be like} flames burning us up. ²⁸The Israelites would kill any person who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses, as long as at least two or three people confirmed that the person had done that. They would not be merciful to that person. ²⁹But now consider people who shame God's Son. They treat his blood as if it were ordinary, even though God used that blood to make his covenant and set them apart for himself. They make fun of God's Spirit, who acts graciously. God will rightly punish those people more than {he punished anyone who completely stopped obeying the laws that God gave through Moses}. ³⁰{We know that is true,} because we have encountered God, who spoke, "I am the one who will punish people when they

act against me. I will do so in a way that they deserve.” Further, {he} also {spoke}, “I, the Lord, will decide whether my people are guilty or innocent.” ³¹Those who deserve the only real God to punish them should be afraid!

³²On the other hand, I want you to think about what it was like when you first learned about the good news. During that time, you continued {to trust God} while you firmly withstood what you suffered. ³³In some cases, people publicly insulted and hurt you. In other cases, you helped other people who experienced those same things. ³⁴More specifically, you acted compassionately toward those in jail. Also, you rejoiced even when people took away what you owned. {You did that} because you recognized that God has something greater and more lasting for you. ³⁵Therefore, continue to be confident {that God will do what he has promised}. God greatly rewards those who are confident in this way.

³⁶As you can see, you need to continue {to trust God}. That way, once you have done what God desires, you will receive what he has promised {to give to you}. ³⁷Here is what a prophet wrote:

“Very soon, the person who is going to arrive will arrive.

He will not wait a long time.

³⁸Further, those who serve me righteously will trust {in me} while they are alive.

But suppose they stop {trusting in me}.

Then, they will not please me.”

³⁹However, we are not those who stop {trusting in God}, whom he will destroy. Rather, we are those who trust {in God}, so he saves us.

Chapter 11

¹When people trust God, it makes them sure that they will receive what they confidently expect. {When people trust God,} it makes them certain about things that they do not see. ²In fact, because the Israelite ancestors trusted God, he approved of them. ³Because we trust God, we recognize that, by speaking, God set up everything that exists. So then, the things we see did not come from other things we can see.

⁴Because he trusted God, Adam’s son Abel presented a more acceptable offering to God than did his older brother Cain. Because he trusted God, God approved of him for what he presented and declared that he did what was right. Although Abel died, we can still learn from how he trusted God.

⁵Because Enoch trusted God, God took him {to heaven}, and so he never died. As {Moses wrote,} “No one could find him. That is because God took him {to heaven}.” Now before God took {Enoch to heaven}, he declared that Enoch pleased him. ⁶In fact, people can only please God when they trust him. {That is} because people who go closer to God have to believe that he is real and that he will reward people who want to serve and worship him.

⁷Because he trusted God, Noah honored God {by believing him} when God revealed to him what he could not yet experience. So, Noah built the ark to rescue his family {from the flood that God would send}. Since Noah trusted God {in this way}, he proved that everyone else was guilty. Further, Noah became a person whom God made right with himself because Noah trusted him.

⁸Because he trusted God, Abraham did what God said when God spoke to him. He left {his home} to travel to a location that God would soon make to be his new home. When he left {his home}, he did not even know exactly where {this new home would be}. ⁹Because he trusted God, Abraham stayed in the country that God had promised {to give him}, but it was not yet his country. He lived with Isaac his son and Jacob his grandson in temporary shelters, {even though} God promised to all three of them {that he would give them this country}. ¹⁰{Abraham lived like that} because he was looking forward to {living in} the secure and permanent {heavenly} city that God created.

¹¹Because he believed, Abraham was able to have a son with {his wife} Sarah even though he was old enough that he could not normally have had a child. {That happened} because he reckoned that God would certainly do what he said. ¹²So then, even though he was very old, Abraham had many descendants, {the Israelites}. {Just as God promised,} there are as many {Israelites} as there are many stars in the sky and as there are many grains of sand on a beach by the ocean.

¹³All those people trusted God until they died. {While they lived,} they did not experience what God had promised {to give them}, but they knew that God would soon do what he had promised. They showed everyone that they did not really belong in this world. ¹⁴Indeed, all people who speak what they spoke {about not belonging in this world} show clearly that they desire {to live in} their own country. ¹⁵But suppose these {faithful people} considered the country they had left {to be their own country}. In that case, they could have gone back there, {but they did not}. ¹⁶But here is what is true {about them}: they longed for a greater country that is in heaven. Because of that, it honors God when other people describe him as the God of these people {who trusted him}. {You can tell that this is true,} because God has made a city for them {to live in}.

¹⁷Because he trusted God, when God tested him, Abraham would have presented {his son} Isaac {as an offering}. Indeed, the man to whom God promised {many descendants} was about to present {as an offering} the only child {he and his wife Sarah had}. ¹⁸{In fact,} God {had already} said to Abraham, "The many descendants {that I promised to give you} will come from {your son} Isaac." ¹⁹{Abraham acted in this way because} he reckoned that God could make dead people alive again. In fact, in a manner of speaking, Abraham did get Isaac back after he had died.

²⁰Because he trusted God, Isaac blessed {his sons} Jacob and Esau, declaring what would happen {to each of them}.

²¹Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Jacob blessed both sons of {his son} Joseph. He praised God while he leaned on his walking stick.

²²Because he trusted God, when he was about to die, Joseph spoke about how the Israelites would leave {the land of Egypt}. Also, he commanded {them to take} his bones {with them when they left}.

²³Because they trusted God, Moses' father and mother kept Moses hidden for 13 weeks after he was born. They bravely disobeyed what the king {of Egypt} commanded {about killing the sons of the Israelites}. {They did that} because they could tell that Moses was a good child.

²⁴Because he trusted God, when he grew up, Moses rejected how he was living as the {adopted} son of one {of the daughters} of the king of Egypt. ²⁵He decided to experience how people mistreated God's people rather than to enjoy sinning for a little while. ²⁶He reckoned that people insulting him because of the Messiah was more valuable than all the valuable things in {the land of} Egypt. {He thought in this way,} because he focused on how God would reward him. ²⁷Because he trusted God, Moses departed from {the land of} Egypt. He was not afraid of {what} the king {would do} while he was angry. {He acted in that way,} because he continued {to trust God as completely} as if he could see God, who is invisible. ²⁸Because he trusted God, Moses led the Israelites in celebrating the {first} Passover festival and spreading blood {from lambs on their doors}. {They did that} so that the spiritual being who killed the eldest children {of the Egyptians} would not kill their {eldest children}.

²⁹Because they trusted God, the Israelites walked across the Sea of Reeds like {they were walking on} hard ground {when God made a path for them}. Then, when the Egyptians tried to follow, they drowned in the water {when God covered the path}.

³⁰Because the Israelites trusted God, he broke down the walls {around the city} of Jericho after the Israelites {repeatedly} marched around the city during one week.

³¹Because she trusted God, Rahab, who was a prostitute, kept the spies {whom Joshua had sent} safe. {Because she did that,} the Israelites did not kill her when they killed {everyone else who lived in Jericho}, everyone who did not obey {God}.

³²I cannot now say any more about this. Indeed, I do not have the time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the {other} prophets. ³³Because such people trusted God, some of them defeated foreign armies. Others ruled justly. Others received what God had promised. Others kept lions from eating them. ³⁴Others stopped fire from burning them. Others survived when someone violently attacked them. Others became powerful when they were weak. Others fought their enemies powerfully. Others completely defeated soldiers from other countries. ³⁵Some women experienced how God made their {family members} who had died to become alive again. However, other people experienced how others intentionally hurt them {to make them disobey God}. They kept obeying God despite that. That way, God would make them alive again so that they could never die. ³⁶Further, other people suffered when others made fun of them or struck their backs with ropes. Sometimes, rulers even arrested them and put them in jail. ³⁷People killed these {faithful people} by throwing rocks at them or by cutting them in half. People tempted them {to disobey God}. People killed them with swords. These {faithful people} wandered around wearing only animal skins. They had nothing, and people persecuted them and treated them badly. ³⁸{People treated them like that even though} they did not deserve to live in the same place with those who trusted God. {Despite that,} these faithful people had to live in wilderness places, on hills, and in caves in the earth.

³⁹Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not {yet} give them what he had promised {to give them}. ⁴⁰Rather, God prepared ahead of time to give us something greater {than what those people received while they lived}. That way, only when we and they are all together will we all be what God wants us to be.

Chapter 12

¹So then, because all those people who trusted God are watching us, we need to persevere in trusting God too. To do that, we need to stop sinning and avoid anything else that could hinder us. ²We need to focus on Jesus, the one who enables us to trust God at first and then to do so until we die. He himself persevered when he died on the cross, and he did not care that he died shamefully. {He acted in those ways} because he knew that God would make him joyful afterward. Now, he is with God {the Father}, where he sits on the throne and rules.

³You need to think about Jesus, who persevered when sinners quarreled with him, {although} they {only} hurt themselves. That way, you can be strong on the inside and persevere. ⁴So far, you have not died while you oppose {what is evil} and work hard not to sin. ⁵Further, you have failed to remember what {Solomon} encouraged his children to do, which also applies to you. {Here is what Solomon wrote}:

"My child, learn carefully when the Lord trains you.

Indeed, persevere when he corrects you.

⁶{You should do that,} because the Lord {God} trains everyone he loves.

Indeed, he severely corrects every child he calls his own."

⁷You need to persevere so that God can train you. God acts in these ways toward you because you are his children. {You can tell that this is true,} because parents always train their own children. ⁸Suppose God did not train you, even though he trained everybody else. In that case, you would not actually be {God's} children. ⁹Moreover, our human parents trained us when we were children, and we respected them. So, we should accept it even more when our spiritual Father{, God, trains us}. That way, we will live {forever}. ¹⁰Further, our human parents trained us for a short time in the ways that they thought were right. However, God our Father {trains us} in the ways that are best {for us}. That way, we become those whom he has set apart, just as he sets himself apart. ¹¹Whenever God trains us, we hurt rather than rejoice while it is happening. However, once we learn from how God is training us, we are able peacefully to do what is right.

¹²Because of all that, you need to prepare yourselves to persevere in trusting God, just like runners prepare their tired bodies to continue running. ¹³You need to focus on trusting and obeying God, just like a runner focuses on

running the straightest path. That way, anyone who is spiritually weak will not stop trusting God but will instead trust him more. ¹⁴You should seek to live peacefully with everybody. Also, {you should seek} to set yourselves apart for God. Only if you do that will you eventually be with the Lord. ¹⁵Make sure that your fellow believers fully receive what God has given you. {Be alert for} anyone who begins to behave resentfully and disturbs {fellow believers}. That may lead many {other believers} to behave that way as well. ¹⁶{Be alert for} people who have improper sex or do not set themselves apart for God. {These people are} like Esau, who allowed {his younger brother Jacob} to act as the firstborn child in order to get some food {from him}. ¹⁷{You should avoid being like Esau,} because you realize what happened to him later. He wanted his father to bless him, but his father refused to do so. As you can see, Esau could not change what he had done, even when he cried while he tried {to change it}.

¹⁸We have not gone closer to {what the Israelites went closer to when they arrived at Mount Sinai}. {They went closer to a mountain} that they could feel {with their hands}. They saw flames burning, dark clouds, shadows, and a thunderstorm. ¹⁹They heard someone playing a trumpet and God speaking a message. When they heard God speaking, they pleaded for him not to say any more to them. ²⁰{They did that,} because they were afraid when God commanded them, "You must kill all people and animals that touch this mountain. {You must kill them} by throwing rocks at them." ²¹Further, when Moses saw how frightening everything was, he said, "I am shaking because I am afraid!" ²²In contrast to that, you have gone closer to a heavenly place, Mount Zion. {On this mountain is} the city Jerusalem in heaven that belongs to the only real God. {In the city are} very many spiritual beings who celebrate together. ²³Also {in the city are} those whose {names} God has recorded in heaven. {They are} God's people, his special children. {There} also {is} God, the one who decides whether all {people} are guilty or innocent. {There} too {are} those who obeyed God. They died, but God has now made them what he wants them to be. ²⁴Also {in the city is} Jesus, through whom God has made a new agreement. {There} also {is} Jesus' blood, which purifies us. His blood is more effective than Abel's blood.

²⁵Make sure that you obey God, who is speaking to you. Consider how some of the Israelites did not obey what God revealed to them from Mount Sinai. God certainly punished them. Now consider how much more {God will punish any of} us who do not obey what he {reveals to us} from Mount Zion. ²⁶When God spoke from Mount Sinai, it made the earth quake. However, at this time he promises, "One more time, I will make the earth and also heaven quake." ²⁷The words "one more time" mean that God will transform everything that he shakes. {He will do that} just as he created all those things. That way, everything that he does not shake will last forever. ²⁸So, we will live in a kingdom that God will not quake. {Because of that,} we should thank God. By doing that, we respectfully worship God in a way that pleases him. ²⁹{We should do so respectfully,} because the God we {worship} is {as powerful and dangerous as} a raging fire.

Chapter 13

¹Persist in loving your fellow believers. ²Make sure that you are welcoming other people. {You should do that} because some people who welcomed others actually welcomed spiritual beings, although they did not know {that they were spiritual beings}. ³Be sure to help those who are in jail. {You should help them} as {you would want others to help you} were you in jail with them. {Also, do not forget to help} those whom others treat badly. {You should do that} because you too are humans {who can suffer}.

⁴All of you should greatly value how God joins people together when they marry. Further, people who marry should have sex only with their spouses. {You should do those things} because God will declare guilty anyone who has sex with a married person or who has improper sex in any way. ⁵You should always avoid desiring money. {You can do that} by being happy with whatever you have. {You should behave in this way,} because God has spoken {these words to each of you}:

"I will definitely not abandon you.

Yes, I will always be with you."

⁶Because {God says that,} we boldly speak {these words}:

"The Lord {God} is the one who supports me.

Because of that, I do not fear anyone.

No one can do anything to {hurt} me."

⁷Pay attention to the people who were in charge of your group. I mean the ones who told you about {what} God {has done}. Examine {the good things} that happened because of how they lived. You should imitate how they trusted God. ⁸Jesus the Messiah has never changed and will never change.

⁹Do not let other people mislead you by teaching you many kinds of things that do not fit {with the good news}. {You should reject what they teach,} because only what God gives us rightly makes us strong. The food {that we eat} cannot {do that}. In fact, people who act as if {food could do that} gain nothing. ¹⁰We benefit from {Jesus}' offering, {which is greater than the offerings that} the priests presented in the sacred tent. {In fact, those priests} would be unable to participate in Jesus' offering.

¹¹In the Most Holy Place, the ruling priest would present blood from animals {that he had killed}. {He did that} to take away sins. Someone {then} would completely burn the remains of these animals away from where the Israelites were staying. ¹²Therefore, Jesus too died away from where people lived {in the city of Jerusalem}. {He did that} to set {God's} people apart for himself by offering his own blood. ¹³So then, we should abandon everything that could separate us from the Messiah. {As we do that,} we should accept it when people insult us like they insulted him. ¹⁴{We should do that} because, here {on earth}, we do not live in any city that will last forever. Rather, we desire {to live in} the city that God will soon give us.

¹⁵With Jesus helping us, we should frequently praise God, as if we were presenting offerings to him. We do that when we say that we believe in Jesus. ¹⁶Further, we need to make sure that we help others by giving some of what we have to them. Doing that is like presenting offerings that please God.

¹⁷Those who are in charge of your group {know that} God considers them responsible for you, and so they always focus on taking care of you. Because of that, you should respectfully do what they require. That way, they can {lead your group} joyfully instead of sadly. Indeed, {if they led sadly,} that would not help you at all.

¹⁸Please ask God to help me and those with me. {I ask that} because we are sure that we are not guilty. Indeed, we always want to behave properly. ¹⁹I urge you still more to ask God to send me back to you quickly.

²⁰God is the one who makes his people peaceful. He made our Lord Jesus alive again after he had died. Jesus is like a powerful shepherd who leads us, his sheep. {God made him alive again} because Jesus used his own blood to make {the new} covenant that will last forever. ²¹We pray that God will provide you with all {his} good {gifts}. That way, you can do what he wants you to do. In fact, he works through Jesus the Messiah to enable us to do what pleases him. So, let us honor God forever! May it be so!

²²I have sent you a short letter. So, I ask you, fellow believers, to please consider carefully what I have said to encourage you.

²³I want you to be aware that {the authorities} have released Timothy, our fellow believer. If he arrives here quickly, we will visit you together.

²⁴Say hello to everyone who is in charge of your group. Also, {say hello to} all God's people. The {believers} who are from the country of Italy say hello to you.

²⁵{I pray that God will} be gracious to you all.

James

Chapter 1

¹I, James, serve God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. I am writing this letter to you who believe in Jesus and are living in various parts of the Roman Empire. I greet you all.

²My fellow believers, consider it something to rejoice over greatly when you experience various kinds of hardships.

³Understand that as you trust God in hardships, this helps you to become a stronger person. ⁴Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow the Messiah in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

⁵If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, and God will tell him. God gives generously to everyone. God does not scold people {who ask for things}. ⁶But when you pray to God, you must trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and help you. People who doubt God first decide to do one thing, but then they want to do something else. They never settle on a single course of action. ⁷Indeed, people who doubt should not think that God the Lord will give them what they ask for {so uncertainly}. ⁸People like this can never decide what to do. They make a plan, but then they do not follow it.

⁹Believers who do not have much money should be glad, because God has honored them. ¹⁰But believers who have a lot of money should be glad that God has humbled them {by showing them that their wealth does not make them better than other people}. After all, like wildflowers {that bloom for only a short time and then wither}, rich believers will die {like anyone else}. ¹¹A wildflower only lasts a short time because when the sun rises, its scorching heat dries out the plants so that their flowers fall off. They are no longer beautiful. Like the flower that dies, rich people will die while they are trying to make money.

¹²God honors those who remain faithful to him in difficult circumstances. Indeed, God will reward them by having them live forever. That is what God has promised to do for all who love him.

¹³When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us. No, no one can persuade God to do evil, and God never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. ¹⁴But people want to do evil because of their own desires. When they do, it is just as if they had fallen into a trap. ¹⁵Then, because they have desired to do evil things, they begin to do them, and eventually they do them habitually. {If they do not turn away from their sinful behavior,} they will be separated from God forever.

¹⁶My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. ¹⁷Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He created the sun, moon, and stars. But God does not change the way shadows change, appearing and disappearing. God never changes. He is always good! ¹⁸God became our spiritual father when we trusted in his true message. That was what he wanted to do. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to experience the kind of relationship with God that many more people will have in the future.

¹⁹My fellow believers whom I love, I want you to know that every one of you should listen patiently {to what others have to say}. You should speak {your own thoughts} carefully. You should control your anger, ²⁰because when we get angry, we cannot do the good things that God wants us to do.

²¹So stop doing all kinds of evil. Without resisting proudly, do what God has told you to do. God will help you to remember and understand it. This will show that you belong to God. ²²It is important to what God commands, do not just listen to it. People who only listen to it and do not obey it are fooling themselves {into thinking that this will save them}. ²³Now some people hear God's message, but they do not do what it says. Those people are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. ²⁴Although he looks at himself, he goes away {from the mirror} and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But other people consider God's message carefully. It is perfect and it

enables people to do voluntarily {what God wants them to do}. If these people remember what they have heard and continue to do what God tells them to do, then God will bless them because of what they do.

²⁶Some people think that they worship God properly, but they say bad things. Those people are wrong in what they are thinking. God is not impressed with our worship activities if we continually say bad things. ²⁷{One of the things that God has told us to do is} to take care of orphans and widows who suffer hardship. People who do that truly worship God, who is our Father. People are also truly worshiping God if they do not think or act immorally like others who do not obey God. God approves of people who do these things.

Chapter 2

¹My fellow believers, do not honor some people more than others and at the same time trust in our great Lord Jesus the Messiah. ²For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine clothes joins you for worship. And suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes joins you as well. ³And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes. You tell him, "Please sit here in this nice seat!" But you tell the poor one {to go to a less honorable place, saying}, "You stand over there," or, "Sit on the floor!" ⁴This would show that you thought rich people were better than poor people. It would show that you were making your judgments {about how to treat people} based on evil thinking. ⁵Listen to me, my fellow believers whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to own nothing of value to trust in him very much. He will give them great things when he reigns everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. ⁶But you have treated poor people disrespectfully! Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court {to accuse you in front of judges}! ⁷And they are the ones who insult you because you are Christians! ⁸{So you should not treat rich people better than poor people.} Instead, you should obey the commandment that Jesus said was so important. It is from the law of Moses: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you show love to everyone equally, you will be doing what is right. ⁹But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong. And {because you are not doing what God has commanded,} God will say that you have broken his law.

¹⁰{God will say this} because if you break one of God's laws, even if you obey all the other ones, it is just as if you had broken all the laws. ¹¹For example, God said, "Do not commit adultery," but he also said, "Do not murder anyone." So if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder someone, then you have become a person who disobeys God's laws.

¹²{Always} speak and act towards others knowing that God will judge you based on the commandment he gave us {to love others}. When we follow that commandment, we obey God freely. ¹³You should speak and act in this way because when God judges us, he will not act mercifully toward those who have not acted mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we can expect that God will be merciful to us when he judges us.

¹⁴My fellow believers, some people say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus the Messiah," but they do not do loving things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. ¹⁵{To illustrate,} suppose that a fellow believer, whether a man or a woman, is continually lacking clothes and food for each day. ¹⁶And suppose one of you says to them, "Do not worry, get warm, and have the food you need." But suppose that you then do not give them any clothing or food. Then that will be no help to them! ¹⁷Similarly, if you just say that you believe in Jesus but you do not do anything that demonstrates that, you do not really believe in Jesus.

¹⁸But someone might say {to you} that you have faith, while I have works. {He might claim that a person can express his religion through either faith or works and that he does not need to have both.} {But I would say in response that you cannot} show me your faith without works. If, on the other hand,} can show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹{Let me illustrate how believing in God without doing what God wants you to do cannot save you.} You believe that there is only one true God. You are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they shake {with fear} because they also know that the one true God is going to punish them. ²⁰Also, you foolish

person, I will give you proof that if someone says he believes in Jesus but he does not do anything that demonstrates that, then what he says does not help him in any way. ²¹{Here is the proof.} Abraham, from whom we are descended, showed that he was willing to offer his son Isaac {to God} as a sacrifice {if God wanted him to do that}. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person because he showed that he would obey him {and that proved that he genuinely trusted God}. ²²In this way, Abraham obeyed God because he trusted him. When he obeyed him, that helped him trust God completely. ²³That was how the scripture came true that says, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did what was right." Other scriptures say that Abraham was God's friend. ²⁴{From the example of Abraham,} you should recognize that God considers people to be righteous because of what they do, not simply because they trust in him. ²⁵Just as he did for Abraham, God also considered Rahab to be righteous because of what she did. She had been a prostitute, but she took care of the messengers {Joshua sent to spy out the land}. She then helped them to escape by sending them back on a safer road.

²⁶All of this illustrates an important truth. Just as a person's body is not alive if he is no longer breathing, in the same way, a person does not really trust in God if he does not express that trust through what he does.

Chapter 3

¹My fellow believers, most of you should not desire to become teachers {of God's word}. As you know, God will judge us teachers more severely {than he will judge other people}. ²{I will tell you why most of you should not become teachers.} All of us often do things that are wrong. But if anyone is able to avoid saying things that are wrong, he has become the person God intends him to be. He will be able to control all of his actions as well. ³To illustrate, we can put a small metal bar into the mouth of a horse and use it to make the horse go where we want it to go. When we do that, we can direct the horse's large body {just by means of that small device}. ⁴Think about ships too. A ship may be very large and the winds that propel it forward may be very strong. Even so, by using a tiny rudder, the pilot can direct the ship wherever he wants it to go. ⁵Similarly, although our tongues are very small, we use them to brag that we have done great things. Note also that a fire that starts as a small flame can burn up many trees.

⁶Just as a fire burns a forest, when we say bad things, we hurt many people. {What we say reveals that} there is much evil within us. When we say bad things, this contaminates all that we think and do. It can ruin our whole life. It is Satan himself who influences us to speak what is evil. ⁷To give another example, people have been able to tame a wide variety of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and animals that live in the water. ⁸But no one can control the things he says. The things people say are like a dangerous creature that never stops killing people with its venom. ⁹We use speech to praise {God, who is} our Lord and Father. But we also use speech to say that we want bad things to happen to people. {That is very wrong, because} God made people like himself. ¹⁰Someone may use his speech to praise God. But then he will use that same speech to wish that bad things would happen to people. My fellow believers, this should not happen! ¹¹Surely good-tasting water and bad-tasting water do not come from the same source! ¹²My fellow believers, a fig tree cannot produce olives. And a grapevine cannot produce figs. Nor can a salty source produce good water. {Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.}

¹³If any of you are very understanding, you will demonstrate that by living your life properly. Being wise leads us to act gently toward others. ¹⁴But if inwardly you grudgingly resent other people and you think you are more important than they are, you should not claim to be wise. That would be saying that what is false is actually true. ¹⁵People who are envious and selfish are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are thinking and acting like people who do not respect God. They are following their own evil desires. They are doing what demons would do. ¹⁶We can tell that people who are resentful and selfish are not wise, because they do not control themselves. They take part in many different sinful activities. ¹⁷But the person whom God has taught to be wise is, first of all, morally pure. Such a person also makes peace with others. He is kind to them and gets along with them well. He is generous to people who do not deserve it, and he does practical things to help others. He does not favor one

person over another, and he does not pretend to be something that he is not. ¹⁸When people work quietly to help others get along, they can help those others to have good relationships.

Chapter 4

¹I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It is because each of you inwardly desires to do evil things. Those desires lead you to fight {in order to be able to do those things}. ²You desire to have things, but you do not get {them}. This makes you bitterly resent the people who do have them. But you {still} do not get {what you want}, so you quarrel and fight {with others}. If you pray {to God} instead {for the things you desire}, then God will give you {what you truly need}. ³But even when you do ask God for things, he does not give them to you, because you are asking with bad motives. You are asking for things just so that you can use them to enjoy yourselves in wrong ways.

⁴You are being disloyal to God {by not obeying him}! You must realize that those who behave as evil people do are hostile to God. So if that is how you decide to live, then you will be choosing to be hostile to God. ⁵You must realize that God has purposely told us about this in the Scriptures. There he teaches us that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our lives in ways that please him. ⁶If we are living in ways that do not please God, he is very kind to us. {He will help us live differently if we humbly admit that we have been doing wrong.} That is why this teaching is in the Bible: "God does not help those who are proud, but he does help those who are humble."

⁷So choose humbly to obey God. Firmly determine not to give in to the devil's temptations. This will make the devil give up on trying to tempt you. ⁸Be honest and open with God. If you do, he will welcome you into his presence. You who are sinners, turn away from doing what is wrong and do only what is right. You who cannot decide whether you will commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts and think only right thoughts. ⁹Show sorrow and be sad and weep {because of the wrong things that you have done}. You have been enjoying yourselves, but you should be serious {and realize how much you need to change}. ¹⁰Humbly show the Lord how sorry you are for your sins. if you do that, he will honor you.

¹¹My fellow believers, stop accusing one another of doing wrong. Anyone who accuses and condemns a fellow believer is really accusing and condemning God's commandment {that we should love one another}. But if you speak against that commandment, you are not obeying it. Instead, you are acting like a judge who condemns it.

¹²The only one who can judge people {according to the law} is the one who gave the law. That is God, who is able not just to condemn people {for breaking the law} but also to pardon them {even though they have broken the law}. You certainly are not entitled to take God's place and judge others.

¹³Some of you are {arrogantly} saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money." Now you listen to me! ¹⁴You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. In fact, you do not even know how long you will live! After all, your life is short, like a mist that is visible briefly but then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead {of what you are saying,} you should say, "If the Lord is willing, we will still be alive and we will be able to do one thing or another." ¹⁶But what you are doing is bragging about all the things you plan to do. That kind of bragging is sinful.

¹⁷So if anyone does not do something even though he knows it is the right thing that he should do, he has committed a sin.

Chapter 5

¹Now I have something to say to you rich people {who say you believe in Jesus}. Listen to me! You should weep and wail loudly because you are going to experience terrible troubles! ²Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotten. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though moths had ruined them. ³Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded. {When God judges you,} this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are

guilty {of being greedy}. Just as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You should not have been trying to get richer and richer knowing that Jesus was going to return. {When he returns, your riches will be worthless.} ⁴Think about what you have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workers who harvested your fields. These unpaid wages show how unfair you were to these workers. They are crying out to God because of the way you have treated them. The Lord is a God of great power, and he is listening to their loud cries {and he will punish you for what you have done}. ⁵You have bought all the luxuries you wanted for yourselves. Just as cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you. ⁶You have arranged for others to condemn honest people. You have arranged for others to kill people who had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. {But God will judge and punish you for doing all these things.}

⁷So, my fellow believers, {even though rich people cause you to suffer;} be patient until Jesus the Messiah comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they have to wait for their valuable crops to grow. They have to wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. {This rain is necessary for the crops to grow and mature so that the farmers can harvest them.} ⁸Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust Jesus the Messiah firmly, because he is coming back soon {and he will judge all people fairly}. ⁹My fellow believers, do not grumble about each other. That way the Lord Jesus will not have to punish you. He is the one who will judge us, and he will come back soon to do that. ¹⁰My fellow believers, as an example {of how to be patient}, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently. ¹¹Consider how, when people are able to endure suffering {patiently and faithfully}, we say that God has blessed them. {One example of this is the man named} Job. You know about him {from the Scriptures}. You know that he suffered many things patiently. You also know that God planned {to do good things through what Job suffered}. And from that you can tell that God is very caring and kind.

¹²Now this, my fellow believers, is something very important for you to realize. You must never take an oath by calling on heaven or the earth or anything else to guarantee a promise that you make. All you need to say is "Yes" or "No." God will judge you {if you go beyond that and make an oath but then do not keep your promise}.

¹³Any one of you who is experiencing trouble should pray {that God would help him}. Whoever is happy should sing songs of praise {to God}. ¹⁴Any one of you who is sick should call the leaders of the congregation to come and pray for him {to recover}. They should put olive oil on him {to help him recover} and, with the Lord's authority, pray. ¹⁵When these leaders pray to God in faith, God will answer that prayer and heal the person who is sick. The Lord will restore his health. If that person has sinned, God will forgive him {for those sins}. ¹⁶Because the Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins, admit to each other the sinful things you have done and pray for each other. Then God will heal you. If people who are right with God pray, God will answer their prayers in powerful ways. ¹⁷The prophet Elijah was an ordinary person like us. But when he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, the land {of Israel} had no rain for three and a half years. ¹⁸Then Elijah prayed again{, asking God to send rain}, and God made it rain and plants grew and produced crops again.

¹⁹My fellow believers, if one of you stops obeying the true message from God, then another one of you should persuade that person to do once again what God has told us to do. ²⁰I want anyone who helps a sinner to repent to know that because of what he has done, God will save the sinner from spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.

1 Peter

Chapter 1

¹{I am} Peter, whom Jesus the Messiah sent {to represent him}. {I am writing this letter} to you whom God has chosen to belong to himself. {I am writing to you} who are temporarily living in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, far away {from your true home in heaven}. ²God our Father {chose you} according to what he had already decided. {He did this} by his Spirit, setting you apart in order that you may obey {him} and in order that the death of Jesus the Messiah may make you members of a covenant with God. {I pray that} God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful.

³Praise God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! Because he is very merciful to us, he has caused us to experience the new birth by bringing Jesus the Messiah back to life after he had died. {God did this} in order that we would have hope that will never disappoint us, ⁴{that is,} in order that we might inherit what cannot perish, be defiled, or fade, which is what God has kept for us in heaven. ⁵God's power is guarding you by means of your trust {in Jesus}. {He is guarding you} in order to reveal your salvation at the final time {when Jesus returns to judge everyone}. ⁶You rejoice a lot because of what will happen then, even though now for a short time many different hardships must grieve you. ⁷{These hardships} happen in order to prove that you really trust {in Jesus}. {That trust} is more valuable to God than gold, which someone can destroy even though someone has tested it by {passing it through} fire. Because you trust in Jesus, God will praise, glorify, and honor you when Jesus the Messiah {returns and} reveals himself. ⁸You love Jesus, although you have not seen him. Although you do not see him now, you trust him and rejoice with joy that you can hardly express, ⁹because you are experiencing the result of trusting him: God is saving you from the guilt of your sins.

¹⁰{Long ago} prophets investigated very carefully about God saving you. They spoke what God told them about God graciously saving you. ¹¹They were trying to find out to whom the Spirit of the Messiah that was in them was referring to, and to what time the Spirit was referring to. {The Spirit was referring to these things} when he told them beforehand that the Messiah would suffer and that glorious things would happen afterwards. ¹²God told these prophets that it was not for their own benefit that he was revealing these things to them, but that it was for your benefit. Those people who preached the good news to you now have declared these things to you by the Holy Spirit, whom God sent from heaven, {enabling them to do that}. Angels would like to know more about what these people declared to you.

¹³As a result of all these things, prepare your minds for action. Be alert. Be completely confident that God will graciously save you when Jesus the Messiah {returns and} reveals himself. ¹⁴Because you obey God like children ought to obey their fathers, do not allow yourself to be controlled by the {sinful} desires you used to have when you did not know {the truth about God}. ¹⁵Instead, just like God, the one who chose you {to belong to him}, is holy, act in a holy manner when you do anything. ¹⁶Be holy, because Moses wrote {in the scriptures that God said}, "Be holy, because I am holy."

¹⁷God is the one who judges what each person does, and he judges without bias. Since you call him 'Father,' behave in a way that shows you fear him while you are temporarily living {far away from your true home in heaven}. ¹⁸{Behave in that way} because you know that {God paid to free you} from behaving foolishly, as your ancestors taught you {to behave}. God did not pay to free you with things like silver or gold that will not last forever. ¹⁹Instead, {God paid for you to be free} by the Messiah's priceless death {on the cross}. {That death was} like {the deaths} of the entirely perfect lambs {that the Jewish priests sacrificed}. ²⁰God chose him to do this before he created the world. But {it was now,} in this last time period, that God revealed him to you. ²¹Because of what the Messiah has done, you are trusting in God. He caused the Messiah to become alive again after he had died and has shown how great he is. As a result, you are trusting God and expecting {him to do great things}.

²²Because you have made yourselves pure by obeying the true teachings {of Jesus} in order to genuinely love other believers, love each other sincerely and fervently. ²³{Do this} because God has caused you to experience the new birth. {You did not experience this new birth} by means of something that will perish. Rather, {you experienced it} by means of something that will never perish: the message {about Jesus} that came from God and truly lasts forever. ²⁴{We know that this is true} because, {as the prophet Isaiah wrote,}

"All people are like grass, and everything that is great about people is like flowers in the grass.

Just as grass dies and flowers wither, {so do people die and what is great about them only lasts for a short time},

²⁵but God's message lasts forever."

This message {that lasts forever} is the good news {about the Messiah} that we have declared to you.

Chapter 2

¹Because {these things are true}, do not act wickedly or deceive others in any way. Do not be hypocrites, and do not envy others. Do not speak evil things falsely about anyone. ²Just as newborn babies strongly desire their mothers' pure milk, so you should strongly desire to learn true things about God so that by {learning} them you may become spiritually mature. {You must do this} until the time when God saves you completely {from this sinful world}. ³{You must do this} because you have experienced that the Lord acts very kindly {toward you}.

⁴You have come to the Lord Jesus. {He is like} a stone {that is part of a building, but he is} alive. Although people rejected him, God chose him and greatly values him. ⁵And you are like stones that are alive. {Like men build houses with stones,} God is joining you together like a building in which his Spirit dwells. {He is also making you} be like priests whom he has set apart in order to do spiritual acts, pleasing to God, by means of Jesus the Messiah. ⁶What {Isaiah} wrote {that God had said} in Scripture shows us that this is true: "Pay attention! I am placing in Jerusalem someone who is like the most important stone in the building. I have chosen him. He is very valuable. And anyone who trusts in him will surely never be humiliated."

⁷Therefore, {God} will honor you who believe in Jesus. However, those who refuse to believe in him {are like the builders that someone wrote about in the Psalms}: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building."

⁸{Isaiah} also {wrote in the Scriptures that the Messiah would be like}

"a stone that causes people to stumble,

and a rock that offends people."

{Just as people become injured because they trip over a rock,}

people become offended because they disobey God's message;

that is what God determined would happen to them.

⁹In contrast {to them}, you {believers} are people whom God has chosen {for himself}. {You are} like a group of priests {who worship God} and rule {with him}. {You are} a people group that God has set apart {for himself}. {You are} a people who belong to God so that you might declare the praiseworthy things he has done. He has called you out of your former manner of living, when you were sinful and ignorant about God, and he has made you understand the wonderful true things about himself. ¹⁰{What Hosea wrote is true about you} who used to be "no people group at all," but now are "God's people group." At one time "God had not acted mercifully toward you," but now "he has acted mercifully toward you."

¹¹Fellow believers whom I love, you are like foreigners {whose real home is in heaven}. So I urge you not to do the things that your sinful human natures want to do. Those desires will destroy you. ¹²Behave well among those who do not know God in order that, concerning the things you are doing, which they falsely say are evil, they will see that you are {actually} doing good things and they will honor God when he comes to judge everyone.

¹³In order to honor the Lord Jesus, obey everyone who has power {to govern people}. This includes the king, because he has the greatest {human} power. ¹⁴It also includes governors, because the king has sent them to punish those who do evil things and to praise those who do good things. ¹⁵{Obey those who govern people,} because this is what God wants: {He wants you} to do good things in order to stop fools {who do not know God} from being able to ignorantly say that you have done evil things. ¹⁶{Obey those who govern people} as people who are free to do so voluntarily, but do not try to use your status as free people to hide evil deeds. Instead, {obey} as those who serve God should. ¹⁷Be respectful to everyone. Love all {your} fellow believers. Revere God. Be respectful to the king.

¹⁸You household slaves {who are believers}, submit to your masters with a completely reverent attitude. {Do this} not only to those {masters} who act very kindly toward you but also to those who act unjustly toward you.

¹⁹{Submit to your masters,} because this is something that God prefers—if someone endures hardships and suffers undeservedly because that person is aware of who God is {and what he wants}. ²⁰{Submit to your masters,} because there is certainly no honor for you if you endure when someone beats you because you have sinned. However, this is something that God favors: if you endure when you suffer even though you did what is good.

²¹{God favors this} because he has called you to suffer while doing what is good. {He has called you to this} because the Messiah also suffered for your sake in order to be an example for you with the purpose that you would imitate what he did.

²²"He never sinned.

And he never said anything to deceive people."

²³When people insulted him, he never insulted them in return.

When he suffered, he never threatened {those who caused him to suffer}.

Instead, he trusted God, who always judges rightly, {to prove that he was innocent}.

²⁴The Messiah himself was punished for our sins in his body {when he died} on the cross with the purpose that we would live rightly because we are no longer controlled by sin.

God has healed you because people wounded the Messiah. ²⁵{God healed you} because you were {alienated from God} like sheep that had become lost, but now God has brought you back to Jesus, who cares for you and watches over you {as a shepherd cares for his sheep}.

Chapter 3

¹In a similar way, you women {who are believers}, submit to your husbands. {Do this} in order that you may persuade any husbands who do not believe the message {about the Messiah} to become believers without you saying anything to them. ²{They will believe in the Messiah} because they see that you behave sincerely and {act} reverently {toward them}. ³Do not make the outside of your bodies beautiful by having fancy hairstyles or by wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴Instead, make your unseen mind beautiful in a way that will never fade. I mean, have a humble and peaceful attitude. This is something that God values very much. ⁵{Do this} because this is the way that the women who lived holy lives long ago made themselves beautiful. They trusted in God and submitted to their husbands. ⁶Sarah, for example, obeyed her husband Abraham and called him {her} master. God will consider you to be her daughters if you do good deeds and are not afraid of anything terrible happening to you.

⁷You men {who are believers}, in a similar way, dwell together with your wives in an understanding manner. {Treat them} as {you would treat} someone who is weaker {than you are}. Honor them as those who will also receive God's gracious gift with you, which is eternal life. {Do this} so that nothing will hinder you from praying.

⁸To end {this part of my letter}, {I say to} all of you, have the same mindset {among yourselves}. Be sympathetic {toward each other}. Love each other as fellow believers. Act compassionately {toward each other}. Be humble.

⁹When people do evil things to you or insult you, do not do the same to them. Instead, bless them, because that is what God has chosen you to do in order that he may bless you. ¹⁰{We know that this is true} because, {as David wrote,}

"As for those who truly want to enjoy good lives,

they must not say evil things or speak deceitful things.

¹¹They must also refuse to do evil, and do what is good {instead}.

They must diligently strive to have peaceful relationships with other people.

¹²{They must do these things,} because the Lord watches over righteous people.

He listens {and responds} to the prayers of righteous people,

but he opposes people who do evil."

¹³It is unlikely that anyone will harm you if you are eager to do what is good. ¹⁴However, even if you suffer because you did what was right, God will bless you. "Do not be afraid of or troubled by the things that other people fear."

¹⁵Instead, acknowledge in your minds that the Lord Messiah is holy. Always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to tell them about what you are confidently expecting {God to do for you}. ¹⁶But {answer them} humbly and reverently, while not doing any wicked thing, in order that God may shame those who despise the good things you do as people united with the Messiah. {God will shame them} regarding the very things they are speaking falsely against you. ¹⁷{Do these things} because, if God wants {you to suffer}, it is better for you to suffer because you did what is good than {to suffer} because you did what is evil. ¹⁸{This is true} because the Messiah also suffered. {He suffered} one time for the sake of {other people's} sins. He was a righteous person {who died} for the benefit of unrighteous people. {He died} in order to enable you to be with God. Although people killed him, God's Spirit caused him to become alive again. ¹⁹The Spirit also enabled him to go and announce {God's victory} to the {evil} spirits whom God had imprisoned. ²⁰{Those evil spirits} disobeyed God long ago, during the lifetime of Noah. When Noah was building a big boat, God waited patiently {to see if people would stop doing what is evil}. {Only} a few people {were saved} in that boat. Specifically, God brought only eight people safely through the waters {of the flood}. ²¹That water is a symbol that represents the baptism which now saves you. {This baptism} does not wash dirt off of your bodies. Instead, it shows that we are asking God to assure us that he has forgiven our sins. {This baptism saves you} by means of God having caused Jesus the Messiah to become alive again. ²²After God caused every evil and powerful spirit to submit to him, the Messiah went to heaven, where he is at the place of highest honor next to God.

Chapter 4

¹Therefore, because the Messiah physically suffered, prepare yourselves {to suffer as Christians} by thinking {about suffering} the way that Jesus thought{about suffering}. {Do this} because those who physically suffer are no longer involved in sin ²in order that they would not do the things that sinful people want to do during the rest of their lives. Instead, they live to do the things that God wants them to do. ³{I say that to you} because you have already used too much of your lifetime doing what the people who do not know God like to do. {Like them,} you committed sexually immoral and lustful acts, got drunk, participated in immoral parties and drinking parties, and worshiped idols, which God has forbidden. ⁴Regarding those things, people who do not know God are surprised that you do not join with them {anymore} when they do these recklessly immoral things. As a result, they say bad things {about

you}. ⁵{One day} these people will have to admit to God {everything that they have done}. He is the one who will judge all people. ⁶This is the reason why {people} preached the good news {about Jesus} to {believers who are now} dead: in order that {those believers} who, although people judged them according to human {standards} during their lifetimes, by means of the Holy Spirit {now} live {forever} according to God's {standards}. ⁷All things {on this earth} will soon end. So think sensibly and clearly in order to pray well. ⁸Most important of all, love each other sincerely, because if you love others, you will forgive them for many sins {that they may commit against you}. ⁹Provide food and a place to sleep for fellow Christians {who come to you}, and do it cheerfully. ¹⁰Serve your fellow believers with the gifts that God has given you. Manage well the various gifts that God has kindly given you. ¹¹Those who speak {should speak} as if {they were speaking} words that God has spoken. Those who serve {others should serve them} with the strength that God gives them. {Do so} in order to glorify God by {doing} everything that Jesus the Messiah enables you to do. I pray that everyone will see how glorious and powerful he is forever. May it be so! ¹²Fellow believers whom I love, do not be surprised by the painful things you are experiencing. {Those things} are testing you {as people test metal by putting it into a} fire. {Do not think that} something unusual is happening to you. ¹³Instead, rejoice to the degree that you are suffering the same kinds of things that the Messiah suffered. {Rejoice when you suffer,} in order that you may also be very glad when the Messiah returns and shows everyone how glorious he is. ¹⁴If other people insult you because you believe in the Messiah, God has blessed you, because {your suffering} shows that the Spirit of God, the Spirit who reveals how great God is, dwells within you. ¹⁵Make sure that you do not suffer because you murdered anyone or stole anything or did some other kind of evil thing or because you interfered in someone else's affairs. ¹⁶But do not be ashamed if you suffer because you are a Christian. Instead, praise God that you have the name "Christian." ¹⁷{I say this} because it is now time for God to begin judging people, and first he will judge those who belong to him. Since {he will judge} us believers first, think about what {terrible things} will finally happen to those who do not obey the good news that comes from him! ¹⁸{Solomon} also {wrote in the Scriptures},

"If righteous people must suffer many difficult trials before going to heaven,
how much more will the ungodly and sinful people surely suffer!"

¹⁹Therefore, those who are suffering because God wants {them to suffer} should trust God with their lives while continuing to do what is good. God is the one who created them, and he always does what he promises to do.

Chapter 5

¹Now I{, Peter,} urge those among you who are elders {who lead the assemblies of believers}; {I am also} an elder. I personally witnessed the Messiah suffer, and I will share in his glorious nature that God will soon reveal. ²{You elders,} take care of the believers with you as if you were shepherds who take care of their flocks of sheep. {Take care of them} not because you must do it, but because you really want to, as God desires. Do not {do this} in a greedy manner {to get money for doing it}, but do it enthusiastically. ³Do not act like domineering bosses over the people whom God has assigned to you. Instead, be {good} examples to those believers {by how you conduct your lives}. ⁴{If you do those things,} then when Jesus, who is like our ruling shepherd, appears, he will give each of you {leaders} a reward. {That reward will be} glorious {and will} last forever.

⁵In a similar way, you young men, obey the elders {who lead the assemblies of believers}. Now all of you {believers} should act humbly toward each other because {what Solomon wrote in the Scriptures is true:} "God opposes proud people, but he acts kindly toward humble people."

⁶Since that is true, humble yourselves before God, who has the power {to save and to punish people,} in order that he may honor you at the proper time. ⁷Trust God to take care of everything that worries you because he cares about you.

⁸Think clearly and alertly, {because} the devil is your enemy, and he is going around, looking for people to destroy. He is like a lion that roars as it searches for people to kill and eat. ⁹Resist the devil by continuing to firmly trust {in

the Messiah and his message}. {Do this} because you know that your fellow believers all over the world are suffering in similar ways. ¹⁰But after you have suffered for a brief time, the God who acts kindly {toward you} in every way will himself restore {what you have lost} and will completely strengthen you in every way. God is the one who chose you to experience his glorious presence in heaven forever as you are joined to the Messiah. ¹¹I pray that he will rule powerfully forever. May it be so!

¹²Silas has written this letter for me {as I have dictated it to him}. I consider him to be a faithful fellow believer. I have written this short letter to you in order to encourage you and to declare to you that what I have written is about the true and gracious message from God. Continue to firmly believe this message!

¹³In {this city that we call} 'Babylon,' the believers, whom God has chosen {to belong to him} just like he chose you, send their regards to you. Mark, who is like a son to me, also {sends his regards to you}. ¹⁴Affectionately greet each other with a kiss to show that you love each other. I pray that God will continue to make all you who are joined to the Messiah feel peaceful.

2 Peter

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Simon Peter, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am an apostle {whom he appointed}. {I am writing this letter} to you whom God has caused to believe {in the Messiah} just like he caused us {apostles} to believe {in the Messiah}. {Jesus has done this} by his righteous acts. Jesus the Messiah is our God, and he is the one who saves us. ²I pray that God will increase his kind acts toward you and make you more peaceful because you know God and Jesus, {who is} our Lord.

³God has given us everything that we need in order to live a life that honors him. {He does this} by his power as God. {He does this} by what we know about him. God is the one who chose us {to be his people} by his glorious and excellent character. ⁴{By his glorious and excellent character,} God has promised that he will do priceless and great things for us. {He has done this} so that by {believing in} what he has promised, you will be able to act like God, {and} you will no longer suffer the moral corruption that is in the world through the desire to do sinful things.

⁵Because God has done all that, do your best to not only believe in the Messiah, {but also} to do good things. {And make sure that you not only} do good things, {but that you also} learn more about God. ⁶{And make sure that you do not only} learn more about God, {but that you also} control yourself {in what you do and say}. {And make sure that you do not only} control yourself {in what you do and say}, {but that you also} remain faithful to God in hardship. {And make sure that you do not only} remain faithful to God in hardship, {but that you also} honor him.

⁷{And make sure that you do not only} honor God, {but that you also} show affection to each other as family members. {And make sure that you do not only} show affection to each other as family members, {but that you also} love others. ⁸{Do these things,} because if you do all these things more and more, then they will make you productive with respect to your knowing our Lord Jesus the Messiah. ⁹{Do these things,} because a person who does not do these things {is not aware that these things are important.} {This person is like} a blind person {who cannot see what is around him,} {or like} a nearsighted person {who can only see things that are close to him.} {This person has even} forgotten that God has forgiven him for the sinful things {he did} in the past.

¹⁰Consequently, you fellow believers, make even more effort to make sure that God has chosen you to be his people. If you do these things I have just told you about, then you will absolutely never become separated from God. ¹¹{This is true} because, {by your doing} thus, God will wholeheartedly allow you to enter into the place where our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah will rule {his people} forever.

¹²Consequently, {because these things are so important,} I am always prepared to keep on reminding you about these things. {I will remind you} even though you already know {them} and are firmly convinced of the true teaching that you now have. ¹³Nevertheless, I consider it to be right for me to keep reminding you {about these things} as long as I am alive. ¹⁴{I want to remind you of these things,} because I know that I shall die soon. {I shall die} just like our Lord Jesus the Messiah has made clear to me {previously}. ¹⁵In addition, I will make every effort {by writing these things down} to cause you to keep on remembering these things after I have died.

¹⁶{I will do this} because, when we apostles told you that our Lord Jesus the Messiah is coming back in power {some day}, we were not basing {what we told you} on stories that we had cleverly made up. On the contrary, {we told you} what we saw with our own eyes, the divinely majestic Jesus. ¹⁷{I can say we were eyewitnesses} because {we were there when} God the Father honored him and glorified him, {when Jesus heard} a voice from the majestically glorious God. {And the voice said,} "This is my Son, whom I love very much. I am very pleased with him." ¹⁸We ourselves also heard this voice of God that came from heaven when we were with Jesus on that sacred mountain. ¹⁹And we have what the prophets wrote {previously}, {which is} absolutely reliable. Pay attention to what they wrote, because it is like a lamp that is shining in a dark place {that helps people see where they are going}. {That light} will shine until the day {of the return of the Messiah} dawns and {Jesus}, the star that appears

before the morning, gives your minds greater understanding. ²⁰Above all, you should know that no prophet could interpret {his prophecy} by his own imagination. ²¹{This is true} because no one ever prophesied a {true} prophecy according to what a human wanted. On the contrary, those who spoke {prophecies} from God did so by the Holy Spirit guiding them.

Chapter 2

¹But people who falsely proclaimed {messages from God} were also amidst the Israelites. In the same way there will also be people who teach false {messages} amidst you. They will introduce opinions {that will result in} eternal condemnation. They will even reject their owner, {Jesus,} who redeemed them. {As a result of this,} God will soon condemn them {for eternity}. ²And many {people} will do the same unrestrained immoral acts {as these false teachers}. Because of these false teachers, {unbelievers} will speak evil of Christianity. ³And due to their greedy hearts, {these false teachers} will make a profit off of you by telling you lies. God condemned them a long time ago, and God will certainly destroy them.

⁴{This judgment is certain} because God did not let the angels who acted sinfully remain unpunished. On the contrary, he threw them into hell {where they are} chained in darkness. God imprisoned {these sinful angels} there and is holding them there in order to judge them. ⁵And God did not let {the people who lived in} the world long ago remain unpunished. However, he preserved eight people, including Noah, who was a righteous herald, when he destroyed by a flood the ungodly {people who lived in the} world {at that time}. ⁶And God condemned the cities {called} Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed by burning them completely to ashes. {This resulted in God} making {those cities} an example of what will happen to people who dishonor God. ⁷And God rescued Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot was greatly distressed because of the unrestrained immoral acts of the people who acted lawlessly {in Sodom}. ⁸{When he lived with those wicked people {in Sodom}, that righteous man Lot distressed himself every day by what he saw and heard. {He did so} because of the things people did that were against God's law.} ⁹{Since these things are all true, then you can be sure that} the Lord knows how to rescue people who honor him from being tried. And {the Lord also knows how} to keep those who do unrighteous deeds {ready} {in order} to punish them at the time when he judges. ¹⁰And {he will punish} especially those who keep on doing what their sinful hearts want to do, {which are things that make them} displeasing to God. {These people} also scorn divine authority. How bold {they are}! They do whatever they wish! They are not even afraid to insult God's glorious angels. ¹¹But {God's} angels, {even though} they are much more powerful than these people, do not accuse glorious beings in an insulting manner in front of God! ¹²However, these {false teachers} are like animals that cannot think rationally. According to the way they naturally behave, they were born so that others may capture and destroy them. They say bad things about things they do not even know. God will surely destroy them when it is time for their destruction. ¹³{These false teachers} suffer harm as the proper punishment for their harmful deeds. {They are} pleased to party in an immoral manner {even} during the daytime. {Like} ugly stains {on one's clothing,} {they are} disgraceful to your gatherings! {They even} celebrate their deceptive deeds while eating {a meal} with you! ¹⁴They constantly want to have immoral sexual relations with {every} woman {they see}. They cannot stop sinning. They lure spiritually weak people {into sin}. {As athletes train for sports, these false teachers} train themselves to be greedy. {God} has cursed them! ¹⁵They refuse to live the way God wants them to. They are acting wickedly. They are imitating what Balaam, the son of Bosor, did {long ago}. He loved {to receive money as} payment for wicked deeds. ¹⁶However, God rebuked him for his wicked deed {against Israel}. {And even though donkeys do not speak}, God used {Balaam's} donkey to speak to him with a human voice and stop his foolish action.

¹⁷These {false teachers} are {useless}, {like} springs that do not give water. {They are like} clouds that the storm pushes away {before they can give rain}. {God} has reserved the darkness {of hell} for them. ¹⁸{This is true} because they persuade people to sin who have recently {become believers and} stopped doing what wicked unbelievers do. {These false teachers do this} by speaking proud words that are not worth anything. {They persuade these people to sin} by doing whatever their sinful natures want to do. ¹⁹{They also do this} by telling their listeners that they are free to do whatever they want while, at the same time, they themselves are controlled {by their sinful desires} that will destroy them. {This is true} because the thing that overpowers a person's will takes

control of that person. ²⁰And if they have stopped doing the things that defile sinful human society by knowing the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah, but those {defiling things} {began to} control them again, {then} their situation is worse now than {it was} at first. ²¹{This is because} it would have been better for them if they had never learned how to live in the way that pleases God than to learn {this way} and reject {God's} holy commands that {the apostles} taught them. ²²This is a true proverb {that describes} what has happened to {these false teachers}: "They are like dogs that return to eat their own vomit," and, "They are like pigs that have washed themselves and then roll again in the mud."

Chapter 3

¹Fellow believers whom I love, this {letter} that I am now writing to you is the second letter {that I have written to you}. {I have written} both {of these letters to you} to remind you of the things that your sincere minds already know. ²{I have written these letters} in order to remind you of the prophecies that the holy prophets spoke a long time ago. {I also want you} to remember what the one who rules over us and saves us has commanded you through the teaching of the apostles {whom we sent to} you.

³It is important for you to understand that people who mock will come and mock {the return of Jesus} during the time shortly before Jesus returns. {Those people} will do whatever they want to do. ⁴{These mockers} will say, "Jesus' promise to return is not true! {We know this} because since Israel's ancestors died, everything has remained the same. It has been the same way since God created everything!" ⁵{They will say this} because they deliberately ignore that God caused the heavens to exist a long time ago by commanding it to be so, and he caused the earth to come out from water and up through water {by commanding it to be so}. ⁶And God, by his command and by water, destroyed the world that existed at that time. {He did so} by flooding the earth with water. ⁷However, God, by the same command, has set apart the heavens and the earth that exist now for fire. God is keeping them for the time when he will judge and destroy people who act wickedly. ⁸Fellow believers whom I love, do not ignore this one truth: from God's perspective a short period of time is no different from a long period of time! ⁹The Lord is not acting slowly to fulfill his promise of Jesus' return. Some people think {that this is so}. On the contrary, God is being patient with you, because he does not want any of you to be punished eternally. Rather, he wants everyone to repent. ¹⁰In contrast {to what those mockers say}, the time when the Lord returns will come unexpectedly. At that time there will be a great roaring sound and the heavens will cease to exist. God will also destroy the basic elements of nature by fire. Then God will reveal the earth and everything that has been done in it.

¹¹Since God will destroy all these things {I have just mentioned} in the way {I have described}, you must certainly behave in a holy manner and do what pleases God. ¹²{Do these things} while expecting and trying to speed up the time of Jesus' return. On account of that day, God will destroy the heavens with fire and melt the basic elements of nature with heat. ¹³{Although all those events will happen,} we are expecting the new heavens and new earth that God has promised to create. Everyone will be righteous in that new universe.

¹⁴Because this is true, fellow believers whom I love, while you are waiting for these things {to happen}, do your best to make sure that Jesus will see that you are not living sinfully {and that you are} at peace {with God}. ¹⁵And think about this: Our Lord Jesus is patient so that more people can be saved. Paul, a fellow believer whom we love, has also said this when he wrote to you. He wrote using the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶In all the letters that Paul wrote, he also writes about these things {that I have just mentioned}. In his letters are also some {teachings} that are difficult to understand. People who lack knowledge and stability misinterpret those difficult teachings, as well as the rest of the scriptures. {God} will punish them as a result. ¹⁷Because all these things are true, fellow believers whom I love, and because you already know about these things, keep yourselves from ceasing to live faithfully because you let the wrong teaching of those who live like there is no law deceive you into sinning. ¹⁸Rather, live in such a manner that you experience more and more of the kind acts of the one who rules over us and saves us, Jesus the Messiah. And live in such a manner that you know more and more about him.

I pray that everyone will glorify Jesus both at this time and forever. May this truly be so!

1 John

Chapter 1

¹{I, John, am writing to you} about {Jesus,} the Word {of God}, the one who gives life. He existed before there was anything else. We {apostles} listened to him {as he taught people}. We saw him personally. We looked at him and touched him. {So we can testify that he was a real human being.} ²Because he came here to the earth and we saw him, we are proclaiming him to you clearly. The one who has always existed, who had been with his Father in heaven, came here to us. ³We want you to share life with us, and so we are proclaiming to you what we saw {Jesus do} and what we heard {Jesus say}. {If you believe in him,} you will share life, as we do, with God our Father and with his Son Jesus the Messiah. ⁴I am writing to you about these things so that {you will recognize that they are true, and that as a result} we will be completely joyful together.

⁵The message that we heard from Jesus and are proclaiming to you is this: God always does what is right, and he never, ever does anything wrong. He is like a pure light in which there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we share life with God, but we live in an evil manner, we are lying. We are not living truthfully. It is as though we are living in the dark. ⁷But if we live in a pure manner, as God is pure in every way, then we can share life with each other. This is like living in God's pure light. Then God forgives all of our sin and accepts us because his Son Jesus died for us. ⁸If we say that we do not commit sin, we are fooling ourselves. We are refusing to believe the true things {that God says about us}. ⁹But God always does what he says he will do, and what he does is always right. So if we admit to him that we have sinned {and reject that sin}, he will forgive us for our sins and he will free us from {the guilt of} everything that we have done wrong. ¹⁰{Because God says that everyone has sinned,} if we say that we have not sinned, we are speaking as if God were a liar! We are rejecting what God has said about us!

Chapter 2

¹You are as dear to me as though you were my own children. Therefore, I am writing this to you to keep you from sinning. But if any of you does sin, {remember that} Jesus the Messiah, the righteous one, pleads with the Father {and asks him to forgive us}. ²Jesus is the one who sacrificed his life for us so that God could forgive our sins. And this is true not just of our sins, but of all the sins that all people everywhere have committed!

³When we obey what God commands us to do, then we can be sure that we have come to have a close relationship with God. ⁴If someone says, "I am living in close relationship with God," but that person does not obey what God has commanded, then he is a liar. He is not conducting his life according to God's true message. ⁵But if someone obeys what God has commanded, that person loves God in every way. This is how we can be sure that we have a close relationship with God: ⁶If anyone says that he has a close relationship with God, then he should conduct his life as Jesus did {when he was here on earth}.

⁷Dear friends, I am not writing this to tell you to do something new. Instead, I am writing this to tell you to do something that you have known that you should do since you first believed {in Jesus}. This is {part of} the message that {Jesus gave to us and that} we have already told to you. ⁸However, if we think about this in another way, I am telling you to do something new. It is new because the way that the Messiah lived was new, and the way that you are living is new. That is because you are ceasing to do evil and you are doing good more and more. It is as though you have come out of a dark place and have begun to live in light from God. ⁹Someone might say that he is living in a good way, just as God wants him to do. That would be like living in light from God. But if he hates any of his fellow believers, then he is still living in a bad way, doing what God does not want, like a person who lives in darkness. ¹⁰But if someone loves his fellow believers, then he is truly living well, like a person who is living in light from God. He will not have a reason to do anything evil {as he would have if he hated a fellow believer}. This is like

a person in daylight who has no reason to trip over anything. ¹¹But anyone who hates a fellow believer is living in a completely wrong way. He does not understand how he should live, because the wrong things that he is doing are keeping him from understanding God's way. It is as though he is walking in darkness, and cannot see where to go.

¹²I am writing to you, whom I love as though you were my own children, because God has forgiven your sins because of what Jesus has done for you. ¹³I am writing to you who have been believers longer than the others. I am writing to you because you have a close relationship with {Jesus,} the person who has always been alive. I am writing to you newer but steadfast believers because Satan, that evil being, has tried to tempt you to do wrong, but you have successfully resisted him. ¹⁴I have written to you whom I love as though you were my own little children because you have a close relationship with God the Father. I have written to you who have been believers longer than the others because you have a close relationship with {Jesus,} the person who has always been alive. I have written to you newer but steadfast believers because you are spiritually strong. I have also written to you because you continue to obey what God commands, and because you have successfully resisted {Satan,} that evil being{,} when he tried to tempt you to do wrong.

¹⁵Do not desire to be like people who do not honor God. Do not desire the things that they want to have. If anyone desires to be like those people, {he is proving that} he does not love God the Father. ¹⁶{I say that such a person does not love God the Father} because the way that ungodly people live is not the way that God our Father teaches us to live. They want to fulfill their physical desires. They want to get for themselves the things that they see. They boast about all of the things that they own. All of these things come from the selfish and ungodly way of thinking. ¹⁷The people who do not honor God will disappear, along with all of the things that they desire. But the people who do what God wants them to do will live forever!

¹⁸You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, {I want you to know that} this is the time just before Jesus returns to earth. You have already heard that a person is coming who will strongly oppose the Messiah. In fact, many people like that, who are against the true Messiah, are already here. Because of this, we know that it is that time. ¹⁹These people refused to remain in our congregations. However, they never really belonged with us in the first place. After all, if they had belonged with us, they would not have left us. But {when they left us,} then we clearly saw that none of them had actually joined with us. ²⁰But as for you, the Holy Messiah has given you his Spirit. As a result, you all know {what is true}. ²¹I am not writing this letter to you because you do not know the true things {that God has told us}, but because you do know them. You also know enough to recognize and reject every lie that is not one of the true things {that God has told us}. ²²The worst liars are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Messiah. All who do that are against the Messiah. They are refusing to believe both in God the Father and in Jesus his Son. ²³Those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are in no way joined with God the Father. But those who acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are also joined with God the Father. ²⁴Here is what you must do{, unlike those people who deny Jesus}. You must continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard. If you continue to believe and live by the truth about Jesus the Messiah that you first heard, then you will continue to share life with Jesus the Son and God the Father. ²⁵And what God promised us is that he will enable us to live forever!

²⁶I am writing this letter to you to warn you about people who want to deceive you {about Jesus}. ²⁷Here is what you should do {about those people who are trying to deceive you}. God's Spirit, whom you received from Jesus, continues to live in you. So you do not need anyone else to be your teacher. God's Spirit is teaching you everything that you need to know. He always teaches the truth, and never says anything that is false. So continue to live in the way that he has taught you, and continue to share life with Jesus.

²⁸Now, my dear ones, {I urge you to} continue to share life with Jesus. That way, when he comes back again, we will be confident {that he will accept us}. {If we do that,} we will not be ashamed to stand before him when he returns. ²⁹Since you know that God always does what is right, you know that all those who continue doing what is right are the ones who have become God's spiritual children.

Chapter 3

¹Think about how much God our Father loves us! He says that we are his children. In a spiritual sense, this is completely true. That is why people who are unbelievers do not understand us. It is because they have not understood who God is{, and we take after him just as children take after their parents}. ²Dear friends, at present we are God's spiritual children. He has not yet shown us what we will be {in the future}. {However,} we know that when Jesus comes back again, we will become like him, because we will see him as he truly is. ³So all those who confidently expect to see Jesus as he truly is make themselves free from sin because Jesus himself is free from sin. ⁴But everyone who continues to sin is refusing to obey God's laws, because that is what sin is, refusing to obey God's laws. ⁵You know that Jesus came in order to make us free from our sins. {You know} also {that} he never sinned himself. ⁶Those who share life with Jesus do not continue sinning. But all those who continue to sin have not understood who Jesus is and they do not really know him. ⁷So I urge you who are very dear to me not to let anyone deceive you {by telling you that it is all right to sin}. If you continue doing what is right, that will please God, just as Jesus always does what pleases God. ⁸But anyone who continues to sin is behaving like the devil, because the devil has always been sinning, ever since the world began. The very reason that God's Son became a human being was to undo this work of the devil {that kept people continually sinning}. ⁹People do not continue sinning if they have become spiritual children of God because God has made them to be like him. They cannot continually sin, because they are God's spiritual children. ¹⁰People who belong to God are clearly different from people who belong to the devil. Those who do not do what is right do not belong to God. Those who do not love their fellow believers also do not belong to God.

¹¹{You should recognize this because} the message that you heard when you first believed in Jesus is that we should love each other. ¹²We should not hate others as {Adam's son} Cain did. He belonged to {Satan,} that evil being. Cain murdered his {younger} brother {Abel}. I will tell you why he did that. It was because Cain behaved in an evil way, and {he hated his younger brother because} his younger brother behaved in the right way. ¹³Therefore, my fellow believers, you should not be amazed when unbelievers hate you. ¹⁴We love our fellow believers, and this assures us that God has made us spiritually alive. But if someone does not love {other believers}, then that person is still spiritually dead. ¹⁵Anyone who hates one of his fellow believers is doing something just as bad as murdering him. And you know that someone who murders another person is not living in the new way that God enables us to live. ¹⁶Jesus taught us how to truly love each other when he willingly died for us. For our part, we should also be willing to do anything for our fellow believers, even die for them. ¹⁷Many of us have the things that are necessary for life in this world. But suppose that we become aware that a fellow believer does not have what he needs. Suppose also that we refuse to provide for him. Then we are not loving him the way that God taught us to love {people}. ¹⁸You who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, let us not {merely} say that we love {each other}. Let us love {each other} genuinely by helping {each other}.

¹⁹⁻²⁰By doing that, we can know that we belong to God, who is the source of everything that is true. When we are in God's presence we may feel that we do not belong to God because of our sins. When that happens, we can reassure ourselves that we truly do belong to him. This is because God is more trustworthy than our feelings and he knows everything about us{, including that we have trusted in him}. ²¹Dear friends, when we feel that God does not condemn us {for having sinned}, then we can pray confidently to God. ²²We find that when we pray confidently to God and ask for something, he gives it to us. {We pray confidently like this} because {as people who belong to him,} we do what he commands us to do and we do what pleases him. ²³I will tell you what God commands us to do. We must trust in his Son, Jesus the Messiah. We must also love each other just as Jesus commanded us to do. ²⁴The people who do what God commands share life with God, and God shares life with them. I will tell you how we can be sure that God is sharing life with us. We can be sure of that because we have God's Spirit, whom he gave to us.

Chapter 4

¹Dear friends, there are many people who have a false message and they are going around teaching it to others. So do not trust every teacher. Instead, think carefully about what each teacher says and decide whether it came from God's Spirit {or from a different spirit}. ²I will tell you how to know if someone is teaching truth that comes from the Spirit of God {or if he is not}. Those who affirm that Jesus the Messiah came from God and became a human like us are teaching a message that is from God. ³But those who do not affirm {that} Jesus {became a real human being} are not teaching a message from God. They are teachers who oppose the Messiah. You have heard that people like that will be coming {among us}. Even now they are already here.

⁴As for you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children, you belong to God, and you have rejected what those people teach. You have done this because God, who enables you to do what he wants, is more powerful than the devil, who motivates everyone who does not honor God. ⁵As for those people who are teaching what is false, they think and live in ways that do not honor God. That is why what they say also does not honor God, and that is why other people who do not honor God believe what they say. ⁶As for us, God has sent us. Whoever lives in relationship with God believes and obeys what we teach. Whoever does not live in relationship with God does not believe or obey what we teach. That difference enables us to distinguish between people who teach true messages from God's Spirit and people who teach false messages from the devil.

⁷Dear friends, we must love each other. This is what God wants for us, and it is because he loves {us} that we can love {others}. Those who love {their fellow believers} have become God's spiritual children and are living in relationship with him. ⁸God's character is to love {people}. So whoever does not love {others} is not living in relationship with God. ⁹I will tell you how God has shown us that he loves us. He sent his only Son to this earth so that his Son would enable us to live eternally because of what he did for us. ¹⁰I will tell you what loving {someone} really means. Our efforts to love God do not define what it means to love {someone}. No, God himself did that by loving us so much that he sent his Son to offer himself as a sacrifice in our place. When Jesus did that, God could forgive the sins of people who trust in Jesus, instead of punishing them. ¹¹Dear friends, since God loves us like that, we certainly ought to love each other!

¹²No one has ever seen God. Nevertheless, when we love each other, we can see that God lives within us and that he is the one who enables us to love others, just as he intended for us to do. ¹³This is how we can be sure that we are sharing life with God and that God is sharing life with us: He has given us his own Spirit. ¹⁴We {apostles} have seen God's Son {Jesus on earth}, and we solemnly tell others that the Father sent him to save the people in the world {from suffering eternally for their sins}. ¹⁵So God continues to share life with those who say the truth about Jesus. They say, "He is the Son of God." And so they continue to share life with God. ¹⁶We have experienced how God loves us and we believe that he loves us. Because God's nature is to love people, those who continue to love others share life with God, and God shares life with them. ¹⁷When we continue to share life with God, then God has achieved his purpose in loving us. As a result, when the time comes for God to judge us, we will be confident {that he will not condemn us}. This is because we are {loving others as we live} in this world just as Jesus does. ¹⁸We will not be afraid {of God} if we truly love him, because those who love {God} completely cannot be afraid {of him}. We would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us. So those who are afraid {of God} have not completely understood how much he loves them, and they are not loving {God} completely. ¹⁹We love {God and others} because God loved us first. ²⁰People are lying if they say that they love God but they also hate a fellow believer. After all, we can see our fellow believers. But we have not seen God. So those who do not love one of their fellow believers certainly cannot be loving God, {because it is much easier to love someone whom you can see than someone whom you cannot see}. ²¹Keep in mind that this is what God has commanded us: If we love him, we must also love our fellow believers.

Chapter 5

¹All those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah are spiritually children of God. Now, whoever loves anyone who is a father {certainly} loves his child also. {So if we believe in Jesus, then we love God, and therefore we should also love our fellow believers.} ²We can be sure that we truly love others who believe that Jesus is the Messiah when we love God and do what he commands us to do. ³I am saying this because what loving God really means is that we do what he commands us to do. And it is not difficult to do what he commands us to do. ⁴Here is the reason why it is not difficult for us to do what God commands. All of us who have become God's spiritual children have been able to refuse to do what unbelievers want us to do. There is one reason why we are stronger than everything that is against God. It is because we trust in Jesus. ⁵I will tell you who is stronger than everything that is against God: It is anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶Jesus the Messiah is the one who came {to earth from God}, experiencing both {the} water {of his baptism} and {the} blood {of his death on the cross}. God showed that he had truly sent Jesus not only {when John baptized Jesus} in water, but also when Jesus' blood flowed from his body {when he died}. And God's Spirit declares {truthfully that Jesus the Messiah did these things}, because the Spirit always tells the truth. ⁷So there are three ways by which we know {that Jesus is the Messiah who came from God}. ⁸{Those three ways are:} what God's Spirit tells us, what happened {when John baptized Jesus} in water, and what happened when {Jesus'} blood flowed {from his body when he died on the cross}. These three things all tell us the same thing{, that Jesus came from God}. ⁹We rely on what people tell us when we have to decide about something. But we can certainly rely much more on what God tells us. So let me tell you what God has told us about who his Son is. ¹⁰{First, however, let me say that} those who trust in the Son of God already know that what God says about him is true. But those who do not believe what God says are calling him a liar, because they have refused to believe what God has testified about his Son. ¹¹Now this is what God has told us {about who his Son is}: "I gave you eternal life, and my Son is the one who makes this life possible." ¹²Those who share life with God's Son {Jesus} have begun to live forever {with God}. Those who do not share life with God's Son have not begun to live forever.

¹³Because I want you to know that you will live forever, I have written this letter to you. This is for you who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. ¹⁴I also want you to know that we can be very confident that God wants to do what we ask of him when we pray for what he desires. ¹⁵Since we know that God wants to give us whatever we ask of him, {if it is what he desires,} then we also know that God is already giving us what we ask of him.

¹⁶For example, suppose someone sees one of his fellow believers sinning in a way that would not separate him from God eternally. Then he should ask {God to restore the one who is sinning}. If he does that, then God will bring that person back into spiritual life with himself. However, I am saying this only about people who are sinning in a way that would not separate them from God eternally. There is sin that causes people to separate from God eternally. I am not saying that you should pray for people who are sinning in that way. ¹⁷Every wrong thing that people do is a sin {against God}, but there are some sins that will not separate a person from God eternally. ¹⁸We know that everyone who has become God's spiritual son or daughter does not continually sin. Instead, the Son of God protects that person so that Satan, that evil being, does not harm him. ¹⁹We know that we belong to God. We also know that Satan, that evil being, is controlling all the people who are unbelievers. ²⁰We also know that the Son of God has come among us and has made it possible for us to understand {what is true}. He did this so that we can truly know the genuine God. And we are sharing life with the genuine God, {that is,} with his Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is truly God, and he is the one who gives us {this new,} eternal life.

²¹I say this to you who are as dear to me as though you were my own children: "Be careful that you never give yourselves to anything that is a false god."

2 John

Chapter 1

¹{From John,} the elder. {I am writing this letter} to you, the congregation {of people} that God has chosen {to belong to him}. I sincerely love all of you believers. Not only do I myself love you, but all those who know and accept the true message {that Jesus taught} also love you. ²{We love you} because we have all accepted God's true message. This true message has become a part of us and will be with us forever. ³God the Father and Jesus the Messiah, the Father's Son, will {continue to} act kindly and mercifully toward us and will make us peaceful. {They will do this because} they are truthful and they love {us}.

⁴I have learned that some of the believers from your congregation are living according to the true message {that God has taught us}. That made me very happy. This is just what our Father commanded us to do.

⁵And now, dear congregation, I ask you {to do what God commanded;} that we should love each other. I am not writing this to you as a new thing that God has commanded {us to do}. Instead, we have known this command to love each other from when we first believed in the Messiah. ⁶This is what it means to love {God and each other}. We should obey what God commands us to do. This is what God commands you, {to love each other,} so you need to do it. You have heard this from when you first believed in the Messiah.

⁷I say this because there are many people in this world who travel around, deceiving people. These deceptive people refuse to say that Jesus the Messiah came to the earth and was a man. This {teaching} comes from the {original} deceiver, the one who opposes the Messiah. ⁸Be careful so that you do not {let those teachers deceive you! If you let them deceive you, you will} lose the reward that we have worked for. So be careful to make sure that you receive the complete reward! ⁹Those who do not continue to believe and teach the things that the Messiah taught, but instead believe and teach other things, do not have {a true relationship with} God. But those who continue to believe and teach what the Messiah taught do have {a true relationship} both {with God,} our Father{,} and {with Jesus,} his Son. ¹⁰So when anyone comes to you who teaches something different from what the Messiah taught, do not welcome him into your homes! Do not even greet him {or wish him well in any way, so that you do not encourage him}. ¹¹If you greet these people respectfully, you are helping them to do the evil things that they do.

¹²I have much more that I want to say to you. But I have decided not to write them to you in a letter. Instead, I hope to be with you soon and to talk with you personally. Then we will be completely joyful together. ¹³Your fellow believers in the congregation here, whom God has also chosen, greet you.

3 John

Chapter 1

¹{You know me as} the elder{. I am writing this letter} to {you}, my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love. ²Dear friend, I ask God that he would make everything go well for you, and that you may be physically healthy just as you are healthy in respect to God. ³I know that you are healthy in respect to God because of the fellow believers who came here and who told me about your truthful {teaching}. Your teaching agrees with how you live according to the true message {about Jesus}. That made me very happy. ⁴This is what makes me the very happiest—when someone tells me that the people whom I have helped to follow Jesus are living according to the true message from God! ⁵Dear friend, you are serving Jesus loyally whenever you do things to help fellow believers, even those whom you do not know. ⁶⁻⁷Some of them have reported before the congregation {here} how you have shown that you love them. You should continue to help such people because they are traveling in order to be obedient to Jesus, and people who do not believe in Jesus do not help them. Therefore, it is good that you give such people what they need for traveling {in a generous way} because doing so honors God.

⁸So we {who believe in Jesus} ought to give these people whatever they need. Then it will be as though we are working alongside them as they help others to know God's true message.

⁹I wrote a letter to your group of believers {to tell them to help those other believers}. However, Diotrephes does not accept anything that I say, because he wants to dominate your group. ¹⁰So when I arrive there I will publicly tell everyone what he does: He falsely tells others that we do evil things. He does this in order to harm us by what he says. As well as doing that, he also refuses to welcome the fellow believers who are traveling in order to do God's work. He even prevents those who do want to welcome them and forces them to leave the group of believers!

¹¹Dear friend, do not copy a bad example {like that}. Instead, do the good things that you see good people doing. {Remember that} people who do good deeds truly belong to God. But anyone who keeps doing what is bad has not known God.

¹²All the believers who know Demetrius say that he is a good person. The way that he lives according to God's true message also shows you that he is a good person. We also confirm that he is a good person, and you know that what we say is true.

¹³There are many {more} things about which I could write to you. But I do not want to write to you {about them} in a letter. ¹⁴Instead, I hope to come and see you soon. Then we will talk directly with one another. ¹⁵I pray that God will continue to make you peaceful. The believers {here} greet you. Please greet for us {each of} the believers {there} individually.

Jude

Chapter 1

¹{I,} Jude, serve Jesus the Messiah, and I am a brother of James. {I am writing} to you whom God has called, to you whom God the Father loves, to you whom Jesus the Messiah is keeping {for himself}. ²I pray that God will increase his merciful acts toward you and make you more peaceful and make you experience more of his love.

³{Fellow believers} whom I love, I tried my best to write {a letter} to you about how God has saved all of us {who believe}. However, I needed to write {this letter instead} in order to urge you to defend the true things that we believe. {These are things} that God has given for all time to all those whom he has made holy. ⁴{I am urging you to do this} because some men have crept stealthily {into your meetings}. {They are men} whom God has chosen to condemn a long time ago. They do ungodly things. They think that our God permits people to be sexually immoral because he is kind. {They also} oppose what is true about Jesus the Messiah, who alone owns us and rules over us.

⁵Although you previously knew all these things, I desire to remind you {of them}. {Remember} that after Jesus rescued the people {of Israel} from the country of Egypt, he destroyed those people {among them} who did not trust him. ⁶Also, {some} angels did not continue to remain in their proper places where they had authority but abandoned them. {Because they did this} God has imprisoned them forever in darkness {in hell}. {God did this} in order to judge them on the important day {when he judges everything}. ⁷The same is true of {the people who lived in the cities of} Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities near them. They acted in a sexually immoral way in the same way as those angels did. They participated in all kinds of improper sexual acts. By causing these {angels and people} to suffer for eternity in the fire of hell, God is making them an example {of those who reject him}.

⁸Similarly, these {false teachers} are dreamers who not only make their own bodies dirty by living immorally, but also reject the Lord's commands. They even insult God's glorious angels.

⁹Even the archangel Michael was not so bold as to speak slanderous accusations against Satan when he argued with him concerning the dead body of Moses. Instead, he {merely} said, "May the Lord reprove you!" ¹⁰By contrast, these {false teachers} speak evil words about spiritual things that they do not understand. They are just like animals that cannot think rationally. The things that they are naturally able to understand are destroying them.

¹¹How sad it is for them! They act like Cain, {who murdered his brother}. They have dedicated themselves to committing the same sin that Balaam committed in order to get money. God will certainly destroy them like he destroyed Korah and those who rebelled {against Moses with him}. ¹²These people are shamelessly eating with you. At your fellowship meals they are like rocks hidden under the water that ships crash against. They only take care of themselves. They are {useless,} like clouds that the wind carries away before they can give rain. They are {useless,} like trees that don't bear fruit at harvest time. {They are like trees} that will die twice because God will uproot them. ¹³They are {uncontrollable,} like the sea's thrashing waves. They display their disgraceful acts just like the waves bring up foam. {They are like} stars that do not stay where they should in the sky. God is reserving the dark gloom {of hell} for them forever.

¹⁴Even Enoch, the seventh person in the line of people who descended from Adam, spoke about these false teachers when he said: "Listen carefully to this: The Lord will certainly come with a countless number of his holy {angels}. ¹⁵{They will come} to judge everyone and rebuke everyone for all their ungodly deeds that they have done in ungodly ways, and for all the harsh insults that these people, who sin and dishonor God, spoke against Jesus." ¹⁶These {false teachers} grumble {to themselves} and complain {to others}. They live according to their sinful desires and brag about themselves. They flatter people in order to get what they want {from them}.

¹⁷But you {fellow believers} whom I love, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus the Messiah said long ago.

¹⁸{Remember} that they told you, "In the last days {before Jesus returns,} there will be people who mock {the true

things that God has told us}. {They will} live according to their own sinful desires that dishonor God." ¹⁹These {mockers} are the people who are making believers angry with each other. {They live according to their} natural instincts. The {Holy} Spirit does not dwell within them.

²⁰However, you {fellow believers} whom I love, by increasing your trust in God and by praying with the Holy Spirit's help, ²¹keep living in a way that enables you to experience God's love. {Do this} while expecting the merciful return of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, {which will result in} living eternally {with him}.

²²And be merciful to those who are confused {about what they should believe}. ²³But rescue other people urgently, as if you are pulling them out of the fire of hell. And be merciful to some other people, but be cautious with them, as if just touching their clothing could make you sinful.

²⁴God is able to prevent you from returning to a sinful life. {He is also able} to take you without sin into his glorious presence. {You will stand there} with great joy. ²⁵There is only one God. He has saved us as a result of what our Lord Jesus the Messiah {did for us}. I pray that everyone will recognize that God is glorious, majestic, powerful, and rules with great authority. {He was like that} before time began. {He is like that} today, and {he will remain like that} forever! May it truly be so!

Revelation

Chapter 1

¹{This book is about} things that God revealed to Jesus the Messiah. These things are just about to happen. God revealed them to Jesus so that he could tell the people who believe in him about them. Jesus shared these things by sending his angel {to show them} to {me,} John, a man who serves him faithfully. ²I, John, am reporting {to you} everything that I saw concerning this message from God that Jesus the Messiah revealed to me. ³How happy is the person who reads this book of prophecy {for others to hear}, and how happy are all who hear it and obey what this prophecy says, because these events will happen soon. ⁴I, John, am writing this letter to you seven groups of believers in the province of Asia. May God continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. God exists, he has always existed, and he will come {and judge everyone} in the future. May the seven spirits who are in front of the throne of God also continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. ⁵May Jesus the Messiah also continue to be kind to you and make you peaceful. He has reliably told us the message from God. He is the first one whom God caused to become alive again after he had died. He is the one who rules the kings of the world. Because he loves us, he shed his blood for us when he died on the cross, and as a result, God has forgiven our sins. ⁶Jesus is the one who has caused us to become people over whose lives God rules. He has also made us priests who serve God, who is the Father of Jesus. May people glorify Jesus and acknowledge him as their ruler throughout eternity. May it be so! ⁷Pay attention! Jesus is going to come back from heaven through the sky. Everyone will see him, including those who killed him by nailing him to a cross. When they see him coming, every people group in the world will grieve {in sorrow for their sins}. May it be just like that! ⁸The Lord God says: "I am the one who began all things. I am the one who will cause all things to come to an end. I am the one who exists, who has always existed, and who will come {and judge everyone} in the future. I am the one who rules over everything and everyone." ⁹I, John, believe in Jesus as you do. Like you, I am patiently enduring the troubles that everyone experiences whose life Jesus rules. {The Roman government had put} me {in exile} on the island of Patmos because I was telling people God's message about who Jesus is. ¹⁰It was a Sunday, the day {on which believers gather to worship because God made Jesus alive again on that day}. The Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. I heard someone speaking behind me. His voice was as loud as the blast of a horn. ¹¹{The person speaking} said {to me}, "Write what you see on a scroll. Send what you have written to seven groups of believers. {Send it to the believers} in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." ¹²{When I heard this voice,} I turned my head to see who was speaking to me. When I turned, I saw seven golden lamp holders. ¹³In the midst of the lamp holders I saw someone who looked like a human being. He wore a robe that reached down to his feet. He also wore a band of golden fabric across his chest. ¹⁴The hair on his head was gleaming like white wool or like white snow. His eyes were {bright} like a fiery flame. ¹⁵His feet shone like bronze that the heat of a furnace had refined. {When he spoke,} his resonant voice was like the noise of a great river of rushing water. ¹⁶{The one who looked like a human} was holding seven stars in his right hand. A sword with two sharp edges was extending from his mouth. His face shone as brightly as the sun shines during the middle of the day. ¹⁷When I saw him, I bowed down in front of him. I was so overcome that I could not move. But he put his right hand on me and said to me, "Do not be afraid! I am the one who began all things, and I am the one who will cause all things to end. ¹⁸I have been alive forever. When I came to earth, I died, but indeed I am now alive again for all eternity. I have the power to make anyone who has died become alive again. ¹⁹Therefore, write down this vision that you are seeing of me. I will reveal the truth to you about what is happening now and about what will happen in the future. I want you to write down those things as well. ²⁰I will explain the symbolic meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lamp holders. The seven stars represent the angels of the seven groups of believers. The seven lamp holders represent the seven groups of believers.

Chapter 2

¹Write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Ephesus: 'I am the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lamp holders. This is what I say to you: ²"I am aware of all that you have done. {I am aware of how hard} you have worked {for me}. {I am aware of how} patiently you have endured {difficult times}. {I am also aware that} you do not accept wicked people. When people falsely claim to be genuine leaders, you prove that they are lying. ³{I am aware of} how patiently you have endured. {I am also aware that} you have suffered for my sake. {I am also aware that} you have not abandoned your faith in me {even though you have suffered}. ⁴Nevertheless, I must criticize you about something: You no longer love me as you did when you first believed in me. ⁵Therefore, remember how you used to love me. Love me again the way you did at first. Now if you do not love me again in that way, I will judge you and I will not allow you to continue being a group of believers. ⁶However, I do praise you for something that you are doing well. You refuse to accept what the disciples of Nicolaus are doing. {Those disciples eat food that people have sacrificed to idols and they commit sexual sins.} I myself completely reject what they are doing. ⁷Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. I will permit anyone who is victorious to eat {fruit} from the tree that gives life. That tree is in the garden of God." ' ⁸Next, write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Smyrna: 'I am the one who began all things and who will cause all things to end. I am also the one who died and became alive again. This is what I say to you: ⁹"I am aware that people have persecuted you. {I am aware that} you are poor, although you have everything you need spiritually. I am aware that} people are insulting you. Those people claim to be Jews, but they are not acting as if they truly belong to God. When they gather together, they help the devil {instead of serving God}. ¹⁰Those people are going to make you suffer. Do not be afraid, but watch out! The devil will soon lead them to put some of you in jail. The devil wants to show that you will abandon your faith in me if you suffer. You will have to suffer for ten days. But remain loyal to me even if you have to die. If you do, I will give you {everlasting} life as a reward. ¹¹Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. Whoever is victorious will never die a second time." ' ¹²Next, write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Pergamum: 'I am the one who has a sword with two sharp edges. This is what I say to you: ¹³"I am aware of where you live. {It is a place} where Satan controls people. {I am also aware that} you are very loyal to me. You did not abandon your faith in me even when people attacked {your fellow believer} Antipas. He told others about me, and he remained loyal to me. People killed him right in front of you, because Satan has such an influence in your city. ¹⁴Nevertheless, I must criticize you about a few things. Some people in your group firmly believe that they should do what {the ancient prophet} Balaam taught. It was Balaam who showed Balak{, the king of Moab,} how to tempt the people of Israel to sin. Balak led the Israelites to eat meat that people had sacrificed to idols. Balak also led the Israelites to commit sexual sins. ¹⁵Just as Balak followed Balaam's advice, some people in your group firmly believe that they may similarly do what the disciples of Nicolaus teach. {They eat food that people have sacrificed to idols and they commit sexual sins.} ¹⁶But what the disciples of Nicolaus teach is wrong. So everyone in your group must stop doing those things! Now if some of you do not stop, I will immediately judge those people. I will pronounce a sentence of judgment against them and punish them. ¹⁷Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. To the one who is victorious I will award some special bread that I have hidden for him. I will also give him a white pebble upon which I have written a new name for him. No one will know what this name is except the one to whom I give it." ' ¹⁸Next, write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Thyatira: 'I am the Son of God, whose eyes shine like a fiery flame and whose feet shine like bronze. This is what I say to you: ¹⁹"I am aware of all that you are doing. {I am aware that} you love one another because you love me. {I am aware that} you are very loyal to me. {I am aware of how} you are serving me. {I am aware that} you are enduring patiently. {Finally, I am aware that} you are now doing more than you did when you first believed in me. ²⁰Nevertheless, I must criticize you about something. You tolerate a woman in your assembly {who is like that wicked queen in the Old Testament whose name was} Jezebel. She claims {falsely} that she teaches the truth from God. But in fact, by what she teaches, she is misleading people who believe in me. She is teaching them to commit sexual sins and to eat meat that other people have sacrificed to idols. ²¹Although I have allowed her {sufficient} time to stop teaching these things, she refuses to stop. She continues to act immorally. ²²Pay attention! I am going to punish her with a terrible sickness. I will also cause those who act

immorally as she does to suffer greatly if they do not stop doing what she does ²³And {as a judgment against her,} I will kill the children {she has had as a result of her sexual immorality}. Then all the groups of believers will recognize that I examine what everyone thinks and desires. I will punish or reward each one of you as you deserve. ²⁴But the rest of you believers in the city of Thyatira have not obeyed this woman's teachings. You have not taken part in what she calls the secret practices that Satan taught her. I have something to say to you as well. I am going to ask you to do just one thing. ²⁵Just continue to obey the true teaching that you have received until I return. ²⁶To the one who is victorious, who continues to do what I command until he dies, I will give power to rule the people groups on earth. ²⁷Those to whom I give this authority will rule the people groups with irresistible power. They will destroy evildoers as completely as if they were smashing clay pots. ²⁸{They will rule so powerfully because} I will share with them the authority that I myself have received from God my Father. I will also give them the assurance that God is beginning a wonderful new era. ²⁹Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers." "

Chapter 3

¹Write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Sardis: 'I am the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I have these things to say to you: "I am aware of what you are doing. You have a reputation for being spiritually vigorous. However, you are not really acting out of zeal for me. ²Be careful! You are at risk of losing your devotion for me completely. Renew the devotion that you still have left. You have not yet done all that God knows you should have done. ³So remember how eagerly you accepted God's instruction when you heard it. Be sorry for disobeying and start obeying again. If you are not careful to obey me, I will judge you when you are not expecting it. You will not know at what time I am going to punish you. ⁴Nevertheless, there are a few believers there in the city of Sardis who have not been doing what is wrong. They will live with me {forever} and be pure in every way. This is what they deserve. ⁵In this way I will completely purify the one who is victorious. I will make sure that his name always remains in the Book of Life. I will tell God my Father and his angels that I know him personally. ⁶Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers." ' ⁷Write {this message} to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Philadelphia: 'I am the one who always does what is right. I am the one who always says what is true. Just as King David had authority to allow people to enter the ancient city of Jerusalem, so I have the authority to allow people to enter heaven. If I create an opportunity for someone, then no one can deny him that opportunity. If I deny an opportunity to someone, then no one can give him that opportunity. I have these things to say to you: ⁸"I know what you are doing. I know that although you are weak, you have obeyed my commands You have acknowledged that you believe in me. Be aware that I am giving you an opportunity that no one will be able to deny to you. ⁹Pay attention! Some people {are denying that you belong to me. Those people} claim to be Jews, but they are not acting the way people do who truly belong to God. When they gather together, they help the devil {instead of serving God}. Pay attention! I will make those people recognize that I love you. They will come and honor you greatly when they recognize this. ¹⁰You obeyed me when I commanded you to endure suffering patiently. And so I will keep you safe during the time of trouble that all of humanity will soon experience. How people everywhere respond to this trouble will show what they are really like. ¹¹I am coming soon. So continue to believe in me. Do not let anyone cause you to lose the reward that God wants to give you. ¹²I will make the one who is victorious secure, like a pillar in the temple of my God. He will remain in God's temple forever. I will write my God's name on him. I will also write on him the name of the city of my God. That city is the New Jerusalem. It will come down out of heaven from my God. I will also write my new name on the one who is victorious. ¹³Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers." ' ¹⁴Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Laodicea: 'I am the one who confirms all of God's promises. I am the one who testifies about God with complete reliability. I am the ruler over all of God's creation. I have these things to say to you: ¹⁵I am aware of what you are doing. You have not abandoned your faith, but you do not love me very much. I would rather have you commit yourselves for me or even against me! ¹⁶But you are just mediocre. You do not love me very much, but you still claim that you believe in me. That is disgusting, and because of it, I am going to reject you. ¹⁷You keep bragging about how very rich you are. You do not realize that you are actually unhappy. You need someone to pity you. You are actually poor, blind, and lacking clothes. ¹⁸I advise you to get everything from me that

you need, as if you were buying pure gold from me that would make you truly rich. Let me make you righteous, as if you were buying white garments from me so that you could be wearing clothes instead of being shamefully naked. Let me help you to understand the truth, as if you were buying eye salve from me to put on your sick eyes so that you could see. ¹⁹I carefully discipline everyone I love. So sincerely change your behavior. ²⁰Pay attention! I am urging each one of you to love me genuinely, as if I were standing at the door of your house and knocking to get you to open it. If anyone responds to me by loving me, I will become his dear friend. It will be as if he heard me calling from his door and he opened it and I came into his house and we ate a meal together. ²¹I have been victorious and now rule with my Father. In the same way, I will permit everyone who is victorious to rule with me. ²²Everyone who is spiritually discerning should pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the groups of believers. ""

Chapter 4

¹After these things, I, John, saw something remarkable: a door open in heaven! The one who had spoken to me previously, whose voice had been like a loud trumpet, spoke to me again. He said, "Come up here! I will show you events that must happen later." ²At once the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. I saw something remarkable: A throne was there in heaven and someone was sitting on that throne. ³The ruler who sat on the throne shone like a bright red jasper gem and like an orange carnelian gem. Around the throne a rainbow was shining like a brilliant green emerald gem. ⁴Around the throne there were 24 other thrones. On those thrones 24 elders were sitting. They were wearing pure white garments and they had golden crowns on their heads. ⁵Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder came out from the throne. In front of the throne, seven torches were burning. These torches represented the seven spirits of God. ⁶In front of the throne there was also something that looked like a sea made of glass. It was clear like crystal. A living creature stood on each of the four sides of the throne. Eyes covered each creature, all around its body. ⁷The first living creature resembled a lion. The second living creature resembled a bull. The third living creature had a face like that of a human being. The fourth living creature resembled a flying eagle. ⁸Each of the four living creatures had six wings. Eyes completely covered these living creatures. All the time, without stopping, they say: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God who rules over everything and everyone. He is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will come {and judge everyone} in the future." ⁹⁻¹⁰The living beings repeatedly praise, honor, and thank God, who sits upon the throne and who lives forever. When they do, the 24 elders also kneel before God at his throne. They bow down to God, who lives forever. They place their crowns in front of his throne and they say, ¹¹"God our Lord, you deserve to have all creatures glorify you and honor you and acknowledge how powerful you are. You deserve this because you created everything. Yes, everything exists just as you determined to create it."

Chapter 5

¹Then I saw that the person who was sitting on the throne was holding a scroll in his right hand. He had written words on both sides of the scroll. But he had then sealed the scroll shut with seven pieces of wax{, so no one could read what he had written}. ²I saw a powerful angel who was asking in a loud voice: "Who is the person who qualifies to break open the pieces of wax on the scroll and then unroll the scroll {and read what it says}?" ³Yet no heavenly being, no person on the earth, and no one in the abode of the dead was sufficiently worthy to open the scroll and read it. ⁴When I saw that no one anywhere was sufficiently worthy to open the scroll and read it, I wept bitterly. {I wept because I knew that what God had written was important, but I thought that no one would ever find out what he had written}. ⁵But one of the elders said to me, "You do not need to weep! Here is the person we are looking for! He is the {person whom the prophets described as the} Lion from the tribe of Judah and as a branch that would grow from David's roots. He is victorious! Therefore, he is {sufficiently} worthy to break open the seven pieces of wax on the scroll and open the scroll!" ⁶Then I saw that a lamb was standing by the throne. The four living beings and the elders surrounded him. He was alive, but he had marks that showed that others had once killed him violently. He had seven horns. He also had seven eyes. Those are the seven spirits of God that God sends throughout all the world. ⁷The Lamb came up to the throne, and the person who was sitting on the throne

handed the scroll to him. ⁸As soon as {the Lamb} accepted the scroll, the four living beings and the 24 elders knelt down in front of the Lamb. The elders each held a harp and some golden bowls that contained incense. The incense symbolized the prayers of people who belong to God. ⁹The living beings and the elders sang a song that no one had ever sung before. They sang {to the Lamb}, "You deserve to receive this scroll and to break open its pieces of wax {so that you can read what it says}. {You deserve this} because when you gave up your life, you paid with your own blood to set people free from sin so that they could worship and obey God. You did this for people all over the world. ¹⁰You have caused them to become people over whom our God rules and to become people who will lead others to worship God. They will be rulers of the people who live in the world." ¹¹As I was seeing {these events}, I heard many angels singing. These angels surrounded the throne, the living beings, and the elders. There were millions of angels, so many that no one could count how many there were. ¹²The angels were singing loudly, "The Lamb who gave up his life deserves for everyone to honor, glorify, and bless him and acknowledge how powerful, wealthy, wise, and strong he is!" ¹³Then I also heard every creature that exists in heaven, on the earth, underneath the earth, and in the sea—yes, every creature in all of those places—singing, "May everyone forever praise and honor and glorify the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb and acknowledge how powerful they are!" ¹⁴When the millions of angels and every creature sang these things, the four living beings said, "So be it!" Then the elders knelt down on the ground in front of both God and the Lamb to worship them.

Chapter 6

¹Then I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven pieces of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard one of the four living beings say as loudly as a clap of thunder, "Come forth!" ²Then I saw something remarkable: a white horse whose rider was holding a bow {and arrows}! God gave him a crown {to wear in recognition of the victories he was going to win}. The rider went out from heaven fully capable to fight and defeat God's enemies. ³Then the Lamb opened the second piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard the second living being say, "Come forth!" ⁴Then another horse appeared. It was bright red. There was also a rider sitting on that horse. God gave the rider the power to cause wars on the earth. That way the world's people would kill each other. For this purpose, God gave the rider on the bright red horse a huge sword. ⁵The Lamb then opened the third piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I heard the third living being say, "Come forth!" I then saw something else remarkable: a black horse whose rider was holding a pair of balance scales! ⁶Then I heard a sound like a voice coming from among the four living beings. It said, "Make wheat so scarce that a person will have to work an entire day to earn enough money to buy one liter of it. Also make barley so scarce that a person will have to work an entire day to earn enough money to buy three liters of it. However, make sure that olive oil and wine remain so plentiful that their prices do not increase." ⁷The Lamb then opened the fourth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I next heard the fourth living being say, "Come forth!" ⁸I then saw something else remarkable: a horse that was pale because it was diseased and that had two riders. The name of the first rider was The One Who Causes People to Die. The name of the rider sitting behind him on the horse was The Place Where Dead People Go. God gave these riders the power to kill a quarter of all the people in the world. They could kill them by causing wars or famine or epidemics or by making wild animals come into populated areas and kill people. ⁹The Lamb then opened the fifth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, I saw, at the base of an altar in heaven, the souls of people whom others had killed because they spoke God's message faithfully as reliable witnesses. ¹⁰These souls called out {to God} loudly, "You, Master, always do what is right and decide what is right! So please condemn and punish the people on the earth who killed us!" ¹¹Then God gave each of them a white flowing robe. God told them to be patient a little longer, because there were others who were also going to die rather than deny their faith in Jesus. But as soon as all of them had died, God would punish the people who had killed them and had killed the people whose souls were now in heaven. ¹²Then I saw the Lamb open the sixth piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, the earth shook violently. The sun turned very dark, like mourning cloth woven from black goat hair. The moon was full and it became as red as blood. ¹³Then the stars fell from the sky down to the earth. They fell just as figs left on a fig tree all fall off when the tree shakes in a very strong wind. ¹⁴The sky split open and rolled away in both directions, just as a scroll rolls away in both directions if it splits in two. All the mountains and islands also moved out of their places. ¹⁵Then all the people on earth, even kings, high-ranking officials, military officers, rich people, and influential individuals, hid within caves and mountain rocks. ¹⁶They told the mountains and rocks, "Fall

on us and cover us! That way God, who sits on the throne in heaven, will not be able to see us! And that way the Lamb will not be able to punish us!" ¹⁷For today is the terrible day on which God and the Lamb will punish people who have done wrong, and we know that none of us are innocent!"

Chapter 7

¹After these events I saw four angels standing on the earth. One was standing to the north of me, one to the east, one to the south, and one to the west. They were keeping the winds from those directions from blowing on the land or on the sea or against any tree. ²Then I saw another angel coming towards me from the east. This angel was holding a tool that would create the mark of the only true God. This angel called out loudly to the four angels whom God had allowed to keep the winds from blowing on the land and the sea. ³The angel told {the other four angels}, "Wait, first we must mark the people who believe in and obey our God with a seal on their foreheads. Until then, do not keep the winds from blowing on the land or the sea or any tree." ⁴{Then the angel and his fellow angels marked all of the people who believed in and obeyed God.} I heard someone say how many people they had marked. It was 144, 000 people from every tribe of Israel. ⁵The angels marked 12, 000 people from the tribe of Judah with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Reuben. From the tribe of Gad {they also marked} 12, 000 people. ⁶{The angels marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Asher with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Naphtali. From the tribe of Manasseh {they also marked} 12, 000 people. ⁷{The angels marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Simeon with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Levi. From the tribe of Issachar {they also marked} 12, 000 people. ⁸{The angels marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Zebulun with a seal. {They also marked} 12, 000 people from the tribe of Joseph. From the tribe of Benjamin they also marked 12, 000 people with a seal. ⁹After these events, I saw something remarkable: a huge crowd of people! There were so many people in the crowd that no one could count them. They came from every nation, tribe, and people group, and they spoke every language. They all stood in front of the throne, where the Lamb was. They all wore flowing white robes, and they were all holding palm branches. ¹⁰They were shouting loudly, "Our God, who rules over everything, has saved us! The Lamb has saved us!" ¹¹Then all the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living beings. The angels all knelt down in front of the throne with their faces on the ground and worshiped God. ¹²The angels all said, "Yes, may it be so! We praise, glorify, thank, and honor you, our God, forever! We proclaim forever that you are wise, powerful, and strong! May it be so!" ¹³One of the elders then said to me, "I want to make sure you know who these people are who are wearing white flowing robes and where they have come from." ¹⁴I answered him, "Sir, I need you to tell me who they are." He then told me: "These are the people who remained faithful to Jesus during a time of great persecution. This showed that they have become pure from sin by trusting in Jesus, who shed his blood for them when he died on the cross. ¹⁵Therefore, they remain in front of God's throne. They worship God inside his temple without stopping. God, the one who rules from the throne in heaven, will protect them. ¹⁶God will make sure that they always have enough food to eat. God will also make sure that they always have enough to drink. The rays of the sun will never again burn them. The heat from the sun will never again exhaust them. ¹⁷This is because the Lamb who is by the throne will care for them just as a shepherd cares for his sheep. The Lamb will enable them to receive everlasting life, as if they were drinking from springs where fresh, pure water flows. God will help them to stop crying and be joyful."

Chapter 8

¹Then the Lamb opened the seventh piece of wax that sealed the scroll. When he did, there was no sound at all in heaven for a short time. ²I then saw the seven angels who are God's personal attendants. He gave each of them a trumpet. ³Another angel then came and stood at the altar. He had a golden bowl for burning incense. God gave him a large quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all God's people on the golden altar in front of God's throne. ⁴{The angel started burning the incense.} The smoke from the incense burning in the container that the angel was holding went up to God along with the prayers of God's people. ⁵Then the angel took the golden incense bowl and filled it with coals of fire from the altar. He threw these coals and the burning incense onto the earth. When he did, thunder crashed and rumbled, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.

⁶Then the seven angels, each of whom had one of the seven trumpets, got ready to blow them. ⁷Then the first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire appeared. There was blood in the midst of the hail and fire. All of it poured down onto the earth. The fire burned up one third of everything on the surface of the land, one third of the trees, and all the green grass. ⁸Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that was like a huge mountain that was on fire fell into the ocean. As a result, one third of the ocean became blood, ⁹one third of the living creatures in the ocean died, and one third of the ships in the ocean sank ¹⁰Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star fell from the sky. The star was blazing as if it were on fire. Parts of the star fell into one third of the rivers and into {one third of} the springs of water on earth. ¹¹The name of the star is Bitterness. When it fell into one third of the rivers and springs, their water became poisonous. Many people died from drinking that poisonous water. ¹²Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and God struck the sun, the moon, and the stars so that they lost their light for one third of the time. The sun did not shine during one third of the day, and the moon and stars did not shine during one third of the night.

¹³Then, as I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the sky shouting loudly, "Three terrible things will happen to the people who live on the earth when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets! They are about to blow them!"

Chapter 9

¹Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. God gave it the key to the deep, dark pit. ²When he opened that pit, a huge amount of smoke rose from it, as if it were a great burning furnace. The smoke prevented anyone from seeing the light of the sun and the sky. ³Then locusts came out of the smoke and started swarming the earth. God gave these locusts the power to sting people just as scorpions sting people. ⁴God told the locusts that they should not eat up all the grass on the ground and all the plants and all the leaves on the trees {as locusts usually do}. God told the locusts just to sting the people who did not have the mark on their foreheads that showed they belonged to God. ⁵God did not allow the locusts to kill those people. Instead, the locusts kept torturing people for five months. The pain those people felt was like the pain that a scorpion causes when it stings someone. ⁶During the time when the locusts torture people who refuse to belong to God, those people {will be in so much pain that they} will want to die. But God will make sure those people stay alive {to experience the punishment for their sin}. ⁷The locusts looked like horses that were ready for battle. They had what looked like golden crowns on their heads. Their faces were like human faces. ⁸They had long hair like women's long hair. Their teeth were as strong as lions' teeth. ⁹They wore breastplates made of metal. When they were flying, their wings made a noise like the roar of many horses pulling chariots and rushing into battle. ¹⁰They had tails like the tails of scorpions. With these tails they could sting people. Their power to harm people during those five months was in their tails. ¹¹The king who ruled over them was the angel of the deep, dark pit. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon. In the Greek language it is Apollyon. Both of these names mean Destroyer.

¹²{After five months the locusts went away.} That ended the first terrible event. But be aware that two more terrible events are still to come.

¹³Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four corners of the golden altar that is in God's presence. ¹⁴The voice was saying to the sixth angel, the one who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels whom I have bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵Then those four angels went free. They had been waiting for that exact moment. They went free so they could enable their soldiers to kill one third of humanity. ¹⁶I heard someone say how many soldiers there were riding on horses. The number was 200, 000, 000. ¹⁷In the vision I saw what the horses and the soldiers who rode them looked like. The soldiers wore breastplates that were red like fire, blue like sapphire, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions. From their mouths came fire, smoke, and fumes of burning sulfur. ¹⁸Those three things—the fire, the smoke, and the burning sulfur from the horses' mouths—killed one third of humanity. ¹⁹But the power of the horses was also in their tails, as well as in their mouths. Their tails were like snakes, and they had heads that bit people. ²⁰But there were still people

whom the plagues of fire and smoke and burning sulfur did not kill. Those people did not stop doing sinful things. They also did not stop worshiping demons and idols that they had made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood. The people did not stop worshiping the idols even though they were lifeless statues that could not help people. ²¹They also did not stop murdering other people, practicing sorcery, acting in sexually immoral ways, and stealing things.

Chapter 10

¹Then in the vision I saw another mighty angel come down out of heaven. A cloud surrounded him. There was a rainbow over his head. His face shone brightly like the sun. His legs glowed like columns of fire. ²He had in his hand a small scroll that was open. He set his right foot on the ocean and his left foot on the land. ³He shouted something in a voice as loud as the roar of a lion. As he shouted, I heard seven thunderclaps. {In the thunder were words that I could understand.} ⁴I was about to record what the thunders had said. But then a voice from heaven told me, "Keep secret what the thunders said! Do not write it down!" ⁵Then the angel whom I had seen standing on the ocean and the land raised his right hand toward heaven {in order to swear an oath}. ⁶He asked God, who lives forever and who created everything that exists, to confirm that what he said was true. The angel said that God would no longer delay in doing what he had planned to do. ⁷He said that when the time came for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, then God would finish his secret plan. That is what God told his servants the prophets long ago.

⁸Then the one whom I had heard speak from heaven spoke to me again. He said, "Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the ocean and on the land." ⁹So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it. When you eat it, it will taste sweet like honey, but after you eat it, your stomach will hurt." ¹⁰So I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. When I ate it, it tasted sweet like honey, but after I ate it, my stomach hurt. ¹¹Then someone said to me, "You must speak God's messages again about many nations, many people groups, speakers of many languages, and many kings."

Chapter 11

¹Then an angel gave me a reed similar to a measuring stick. God said to me, "Go to my temple, measure it and the altar in it, and count the people who are worshiping there. ²But do not measure the courtyard outside of the temple building. I have given that to the non-Jewish people groups. As a result, they will oppress the people who live in the city of Jerusalem for 42 months. ³I will send two witnesses to announce what I reveal to them for 1, 260 days. They will show they are sad about the people's sin by wearing rough clothes that someone has woven from goat hair." ⁴Those witnesses are the ones whom the two olive trees and the two lampstands represent. Those trees and lampstands are in the presence of the Lord, who rules the earth. ⁵Now if anyone tries to harm those witnesses, they breathe fire out of their mouths and burn them up. In this way the two witnesses will certainly kill anyone who wants to harm them. ⁶Those witnesses will have the authority to command no rain to fall from the sky during the time that they are announcing what God reveals to them. They also will have the authority to cause the water in lakes and streams to become blood. They will also have the authority to make many kinds of plagues happen on the earth. They will do these things when they sense that this will emphasize their message from God. ⁷But when they have finished announcing their message from God, the beast that comes up from the deep, dark pit will attack them. The beast will defeat them and kill them. ⁸Now the two witnesses were announcing God's message in the great city that people symbolically call Sodom because its people are very evil. People also call that city Egypt because its people treat God's people badly. That is also the city where Jesus, whom the witnesses were serving, died on a cross. To insult the witnesses, the people of the city will not bury their bodies. They will leave their bodies lying in the city's open area. ⁹Individuals from many people groups, tribes, language groups, and nations will look at those dead bodies for three and a half days. But the people of the city will not allow anyone to bury those bodies. ¹⁰When the people who do not honor God see that the witnesses are dead, they will be very glad and hold a celebration. They will even send gifts to each other to celebrate. They will be so happy because the two prophets

are dead who sent plagues that made them suffer. ¹¹But after three and a half days, God will make them alive again. They will stop lying dead and stand up! The people who see them alive again will be terrified. ¹²Then the two witnesses will hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them: "Come up here!" Then they will go up into heaven in a cloud. Their enemies will watch them go up. ¹³At that same time there will be a great earthquake, as a result of which a tenth of the buildings in the city will collapse. That will kill 7, 000 people. The rest of the people will become very afraid and acknowledge that the true God had justly punished them for killing the witnesses.

¹⁴That will be the second terrible event. Be aware that the third terrible event will happen soon afterwards.

¹⁵Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices in heaven shouted loudly, "The Lord our God and the Messiah whom he has appointed will now rule all the people in the world! They will continue to rule those people forever!" ¹⁶The 24 elders who sit on thrones around God's throne bowed down with their faces on the ground and worshiped him. ¹⁷They said:

"Lord God, you are the one who rules over everything!

You are the one who exists now!

You are the one who has always existed!

We thank you that you have so powerfully defeated
everyone who has rebelled against you,
and you now rule over all the people in the world.

¹⁸The unbelieving people of the nations were raging angrily at you.

As a result, you have punished them.

You have decided that this is the right time for you to judge all those who have died.

You are rewarding your servants who spoke your message and the people who belong to you,

You are rewarding all those who honor you,

whoever they are.

You have decided that it is time for you to destroy the people who have been destroying the earth."

¹⁹Then God opened the doors his temple in heaven, and in it I saw the sacred chest that contains symbols of God's promise. Lightning was flashing. I heard the rumbling of thunder. The earth shook, and large hailstones fell from the sky.

Chapter 12

¹Then something very significant appeared in the sky. It was a woman who was wearing the sun as her clothing. She was standing on the moon. On her head was a crown that was made of 12 stars. ²She was about to have a baby. She was screaming in pain because it was so difficult to deliver her baby. ³Then something else significant appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon. It had seven heads and ten horns. It had a royal crown on each of its heads. ⁴The dragon's tail dragged a third of the stars out of the sky and threw them onto the earth. The dragon set himself in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he could eat her child as soon as he was born. ⁵Then the woman gave birth to a son. He is destined to rule all groups of people with complete authority. God snatched away this child {for safety} and brought him up to his throne in heaven. ⁶But the woman fled to a desolate region. God had made a place ready for her there where people would take care of her for 1, 260 days.

⁷Then a battle began in heaven. Michael and the angels he commanded fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back {against Michael and his angels}. ⁸But the dragon lost the battle, and God did not allow the dragon and his angels to stay in heaven after that. ⁹Instead, God threw the huge dragon out of heaven. That dragon is the same evil spirit who appeared as a serpent long ago. His names are the Devil and Satan. He deceives everyone who lives in the world. God threw him and all of his angels down to the earth. ¹⁰Then I heard someone in heaven shout loudly,

“Now our God has saved his people by his power, and he rules all people!

Now his Messiah has begun to rule!

This is because God has thrown the accuser of our fellow believers out of heaven.

He was continually coming to God and accusing believers of doing wrong things.

¹¹But our fellow believers overcame him. This is because the Lamb shed his blood as a sacrifice for them and because they spoke the truth about him to other people.

They did not want just to stay alive.

They were willing to die if necessary for speaking the truth about him.

¹²So all of you living in heaven should rejoice!

But terrible things will happen to you people who live on the earth and travel on the ocean because the devil is now among you.

He is very angry because he knows that he has only a short time before God judges and punishes him.”

¹³When the dragon realized that God had thrown him down to the earth, he tried to attack the woman who had given birth to a son. ¹⁴But God gave the woman two wings like the wings of a very large eagle. These enabled her to fly away to a desolate region. God had prepared a safe place for her there. In that place, God took care of her for three and one-half years. The serpent{, that is, the dragon,} was not able to reach her there. ¹⁵Then the serpent poured a flood of water out of his mouth toward the woman. He was trying to sweep her away with the water. ¹⁶But the ground helped the woman. The ground opened up a big hole and the flood that the dragon poured out from his mouth went down into the hole. ¹⁷Then the dragon was very angry with the woman, so he went away to fight against the rest of her children. They are the people who obey God's commandments and who speak the truth about Jesus. ¹⁸Then the dragon stood on the ocean shore.

Chapter 13

¹Then I saw a beast come up out of the ocean. It had ten horns and seven heads. On each of its horns there was a royal crown. On each of its heads there was a name that insulted God. ²This beast was like a leopard, but its feet were like the feet of a bear. Its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. The dragon made the beast very powerful. He also gave him the supreme right to rule over people as their king. ³One of the heads of the beast looked as if someone had wounded it so that it had died. But that wound had healed. As a result, all the people of the earth marveled at the beast and obeyed it. ⁴They worshiped the dragon because he had given the beast authority to rule over them. They also worshiped the beast. They said, “No one is as powerful as the beast! No one could ever fight against it!” ⁵The dragon enabled the beast to speak proudly and to insult God. The dragon also enabled it to rule the people on earth. But God would only allow the beast to rule for 42 months. ⁶When the beast spoke, it insulted God. It said that God was not really like what people believed him to be like. The beast also insulted the people in heaven among whom God lives. ⁷The dragon enabled the beast to fight against God's people and conquer them. The dragon also gave the beast the right to rule over people no matter what tribe they came from or what group

they belonged to or what language they spoke or where they lived. ⁸The names of some of the people living on earth do not appear in the Book of Life. Those people will worship the beast. The Book of Life belongs to the Lamb. The Lamb gave up his life at the beginning of the world in order to become the Savior. ⁹Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to this message from God. ¹⁰If anyone's enemies are going to capture him, they will capture him. If anyone's enemies are going to kill him with a sword, they will kill him with a sword. So God's people must endure suffering and remain faithful to him.

¹¹Then I saw another beast come up from the earth. It had two small horns on its head as a sheep has. But its voice sounded like a dragon's voice. ¹²This beast from the earth carries out all the orders of the beast from the sea. It requires the people who live on the earth to worship the beast from the sea. That is the beast that almost died but whose wound healed. ¹³The beast from the earth also did amazing miracles. It even caused fire to fall from the sky onto the earth while people watched. ¹⁴The dragon gave the beast from the earth the power to do these miracles on behalf of the beast from the sea. The beast from the earth used the miracles to deceive the people who live on the earth. It told them to make an idol that looked like the beast from the sea. That was the beast that survived a sword wound that seemed to kill it. ¹⁵The dragon gave the beast from the earth the power to make that idol live. Then the idol that looked like the beast from the sea was able to speak. The beast from the earth then commanded that anyone who refused to worship the idol would be killed. ¹⁶The beast from the earth also required each person to have a mark on his right hand or on his forehead. This requirement applied to important people and unimportant people. It applied to people who were rich and people who were poor. It applied to free people and to slaves. It applied to everyone! ¹⁷Then the beast from the earth ordered that no one could buy or sell anything if he did not have this mark. This mark was the name of the beast from the sea or the number that stood for its name. ¹⁸You must think wisely about this: Anyone who understands things well can figure out the identity of the beast from the sea. That is because the number that stands for its name actually represents the name of a man. That number is 666.

Chapter 14

¹But then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With him were 144, 000 people. He had written his name and his Father's name on their foreheads. ²I also heard a sound from heaven. It was as loud as the sound of a huge waterfall or of mighty thunder. It also sounded like many people playing on harps. ³This sound was of the people I saw singing a new song. They were standing in front of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had saved these 144, 000 people from among all the people on the earth. Only they could learn that song. ⁴Those 144, 000 people are spiritually pure, as virgins are morally pure. They have not made themselves impure by worshiping any false god. They are the ones who accompany Jesus, the one who is like a lamb, wherever he goes. They represent all those whom he has saved so far from among the people of the earth. Those who have believed in Jesus will share their faith and lead many others to believe in God and Jesus. ⁵These people never denied Jesus. They always lived pure lives.

⁶Then I saw another angel flying through the sky. He was bringing God's eternal good news from heaven so that he could proclaim it to the people who live on earth. He will proclaim it to every nation, to every tribe, to speakers of every language, and to every people group. ⁷He said in a loud voice, "Honor God and praise him because it is now time for him to judge everyone! Worship him because he is the one who created heaven and earth and the ocean and the fresh water." ⁸And then another angel came after that one. This angel said, "The very evil city of Babylon has now become a complete ruin! Babylon forced the people of every nation to be unfaithful to God by worshiping idols. ⁹Yet another angel came afterward. This angel said in a loud voice, "If people worship the beast and its image or allow someone to put its mark on their foreheads or on their hands, ¹⁰God will duly punish them. They will stagger from the punishment as if they had drunk strong wine. He will torment them in burning sulfur as his holy angels and the Lamb are watching. ¹¹The smoke from the fire that torments them will rise forever. God will torment them all the time without stopping. This is what will happen to the people who worship the beast and its image or who allow someone to write its name on them." ¹²God's people are those who obey what God commands and who trust in Jesus. They must continue to do these things faithfully {because those who disobey God and deny

Jesus will experience these torments}. ¹³Then I heard someone speaking from heaven and saying, "Write this: How fortunate from now on are those who die as faithful believers in Jesus." The Holy Spirit says, "Yes, after they die, they will no longer have to endure suffering. Instead, it will be clear that they were doing the right things."

¹⁴Then I saw something else very significant. I saw a white cloud, and someone was sitting on the cloud who looked like a human being. He was wearing a golden crown on his head. He held a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵Still another angel came out of the temple in heaven. In a loud voice, he said to the one who was sitting on the cloud, "The grain on the earth is ripe. So this is the time to reap it. So use your sickle to reap the grain." ¹⁶Then the person who looked like a human being and who was sitting on the cloud used his sickle to harvest all of the grain on the earth. ¹⁷Another angel then came out of the heavenly sanctuary. This angel was also holding a sharp sickle. ¹⁸One more angel came from the altar. He is the one who takes care of the fire of the altar. He said in a loud voice to the angel who was holding the sickle, "The grapes on the earth are ripe! So use your sickle to cut the bunches of grapes off of the earth's grapevines. Then collect those bunches of grapes." ¹⁹So the angel used his sickle to harvest the grapes. Then he threw the grapes into the huge winepress that represents the place where God will punish people for what they have done wrong. ²⁰God trampled the grapes in the winepress outside the city. When he did, blood poured out of the winepress! It flowed in such quantity that it formed a stream that was a meter and a half deep and extended for three hundred kilometers.

Chapter 15

¹Then something else very significant appeared in the sky. I saw seven angels. God had given them the duty to punish rebellious people in seven different ways. This is the last time that God will punish people this way, because through these punishments he will have given people on earth all of the punishment that they deserve.

²I also saw a great flat area of glass that was sparkling with light. I also saw the people who had overcome the beast by not worshiping it or its image and by not allowing anyone to mark them with the number that represents the beast's name. They were standing on the large flat area of glass. They were holding harps that God had given them. ³They were singing a song such as God's servant Moses sang long ago. It was the same kind of song that the Lamb now sings. They sang,

"Lord God, who rules over everything,

all that you do is very marvelous!

You always act entirely righteously.

You rule as King forever!

⁴O Lord, everyone will fear you and honor you because you alone are holy.

Yes, people from every group will come and bow down to you in worship

because you have shown that you have judged everyone in the right way."

⁵Then, after that, I saw that the doors of the temple in heaven were open. That heavenly temple was like the tent on earth that had held the sacred chest. ⁶The seven angels whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways came out of the temple. The angels were wearing clean, white linen garments. They were also wearing bands of golden fabric around their chests. ⁷One of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl. Inside each bowl was a different kind of punishment for people who had done wrong. The angels would administer these punishments on behalf of God, who lives forever and ever. ⁸Then smoke that expressed the presence of the glorious and all-powerful God filled the temple. {The smoke remained there while the angels were administering the plagues.} Only after the seven angels finished punishing the people of the earth in seven different ways could anyone enter the temple again.

Chapter 16

¹Next I heard someone in the temple speak in a loud voice to the angels who had the seven bowls. He told them, "Go from here and pour out what you have in your seven bowls onto the earth. This is how God will punish people for their sins." ²So the first angel went and poured out what he had in his bowl onto the earth. As a result, terrible sores broke out on the people who had allowed the beast's servants to write the beast's name on them. These were the people who had worshiped the beast's image. ³Then the second angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the ocean. As a result, the water of the sea turned into blood. That blood was decayed and stinky like the blood of a dead person. Every creature that lived in the ocean died. ⁴Then the third angel poured out what he had in his bowl upon the earth's rivers and springs. As a result, the water in them turned into blood. ⁵Then I heard the angel who was in charge of those waters say to God, "O God, you exist and have always existed. You are supremely holy. You are a fair judge of people. ⁶The people who rebelled against you murdered your holy people and the prophets. So you are just in punishing them by giving them blood to drink." ⁷Then I heard the altar answer, "Yes, Lord God, you who rule over everything, you punish people completely fairly." ⁸Then the fourth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the sun. As a result, the sun became so hot that it burned people very badly. ⁹Because the sun burned people so badly, they said evil things about God because he had the power to punish them in these ways. But they still refused to stop doing wrong things and they still refused to praise him.

¹⁰Then the fifth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the throne of the beast. As a result, it became dark where the beast ruled. {Because it was like night all the time, the people whom the beast ruled could feel the pain of their terrible sores even more.} So they were biting their tongues because of this pain. ¹¹They also said evil things about God who rules in heaven because their sores were so painful. But they refused to stop doing wrong things. ¹²Then the sixth angel poured out what he had in his bowl on the Euphrates River. As a result, the water in the river dried up so that the rulers from the eastern countries could cross it with their armies. ¹³Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs. One came out of the mouth of the dragon. One came out of the mouth of the beast. And one came out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴Now those spirits were demons that were able to do miracles. They went out to the rulers of the entire earth to gather their armies. Those armies will fight a battle on the important day when Almighty God punishes his enemies. ¹⁵(I heard the Lord Jesus say, "You must listen carefully to me: I am coming unexpectedly, like a thief. It will be good for people who stay alert and keep on living in the right way. They will not feel shame when I return. They will be just like a person who keeps his clothes on so that he does not feel shame in front of other people.") ¹⁶The evil spirits gathered the rulers at a place whose name in the Hebrew language is Armageddon.

¹⁷Then the seventh angel poured what he had in his bowl into the air. As a result, someone said with a loud voice from the throne in the temple, "God has now finished punishing rebellious people." ¹⁸Then lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, and the earth shook violently. There had not been such a powerful earthquake during the whole time that people have lived on the earth. ¹⁹As a result of this earthquake, the giant city split into three parts. God also destroyed the cities in the other nations. God did not forget that the people of Babylon had sinned very much. So he made them experience the punishments they so justly deserved. ²⁰Also as a result of the earthquake, every island disappeared, and the mountains became flat land. ²¹Then huge hailstones, each weighing 33 kilograms, fell from the sky onto people. Then people said evil things about God because he had punished them in this terrible way with those huge, heavy hailstones.

Chapter 17

¹One of the seven angels who had the bowls came over to me. He said, "Come with me. I want to show you how God will punish the evil prostitute whom you saw sitting near a great river. ²The kings of the earth have worshiped the idols she wanted them to worship. The people they rule have also worshiped those idols. It was as if they had gotten drunk on wine that she gave them."

³Then the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. The angel carried me away to a desolate area. There I saw a woman who was riding on a red beast. The beast had written names all over itself. They were names that insulted God. The beast had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴Now the woman was wearing purple and red clothes. She had gold jewelry with precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand. That cup was full of something to drink that stands for the awful things she does when she commits sexual immorality. ⁵And there was a name in writing on her forehead. The name had a secret meaning. That name was: The Great Babylon, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Immoral Things in the World. ⁶I saw that the woman had become drunk because she had drunk the blood of God's people. Those people had suffered for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. When I saw her, that astonished me completely.

⁷The angel said to me, "This should not astonish you. I will explain to you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast on which she rides. That beast has seven heads and ten horns. ⁸The beast that you saw lived previously. Now he is no longer alive. But he is about to come back up from the deep, dark pit. Eventually God will destroy him. But this beast will appear again after having lived previously and then dying. Seeing him will astonish the people on the earth whose names God did not write in the Book of Life before he created the world. ⁹People need to think wisely to understand this: The seven heads of the beast that the woman is riding represent seven hills. Those are the seven hills of the city that the woman represents. The heads also represent seven rulers. ¹⁰Five of those rulers have died. One is still alive. The seventh ruler has not yet come. And when he comes, he will rule for only a short time. ¹¹The beast that lived previously and then was not alive will be an eighth ruler. He is actually one of those seven rulers. God will certainly destroy him. ¹²Now the ten horns that you saw represent ten rulers who have not yet begun to rule. But they will rule people together with the beast, though only for a short time. ¹³Those rulers will all agree to do the same thing. As a result, they will give the beast their power to rule. ¹⁴The rulers and the beast will fight against the Lamb. He will defeat them because he is the Lord who rules over all other lords and the King who rules over all other kings. The people who are with him are the ones whom God has chosen and called to himself and who keep serving him faithfully." ¹⁵Then the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw in the city where the prostitute sits represent a large number of people from many different backgrounds. ¹⁶And the ten horns that you saw represent rulers. They and the beast will hate the prostitute. So they will plunder the city and leave nothing in it. Then they will destroy the city the way a wild animal devours another animal. They will burn down the city completely. ¹⁷They will do that because God has caused them to decide to do what he wants them to do. As a result, they will all agree together to let the beast have their power to rule until God has accomplished what he said. ¹⁸And the prostitute that you saw represents the very evil city whose leaders rule over the other rulers in the world."

Chapter 18

¹After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. God had given great authority to this angel. The angel was shining so brightly that he lit up the earth. ²The angel shouted very loudly, "God is about to destroy the evil city of Babylon completely. {People will no longer live in the ruins of the city.} All kinds of evil spirits will live there. All kinds of disgusting scavenger birds will also live there. ³God is going to destroy Babylon because that evil city influenced many people groups to devote themselves to idol worship. Babylon influenced the rulers of those groups, and they made their people worship idols. Babylon also set an example of living in luxury. This made people in other places want to live in the same way. Those who sold luxury goods made a lot of money selling the goods to those people."

⁴Then I heard someone else speak from heaven. He said, "My people, run away from that evil city of Babylon! If you stay there, you may sin as the people there do. And if you sin as they do, I will punish you in the same way that I will punish them. ⁵Run away because the people of that evil city have sinned very greatly and God is now going to punish them for what they have done."

⁶{The voice from heaven told the angels whom God had assigned to punish Babylon,} "Punish the people of that city just as much as they harmed other people. In fact, cause them to suffer twice as much as they caused other

people to suffer. ⁷The people of the city of Babylon honored themselves. They indulged in pleasures. To the same extent that they did that, torment them and cause them to grieve. Do that because they were confident that they would always rule other people. They were confident that they could provide themselves with everything they needed. They were confident that nothing bad would ever happen to them. ⁸Because the people of Babylon are so wicked, terrible things will happen to them all at once. Some will die and others will mourn for them. People will be hungry because they will have no food. The city will burn up completely. The Lord God is able to punish her in these ways because he is mighty."

⁹The rulers of the peoples who live on earth worshiped idols with the people of Babylon. They indulged in pleasures with the people of Babylon. So they will mourn greatly for the city when they see it burning up. ¹⁰Those rulers will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that God will punish them too if they get too close. They will say, "How very terrible it is for the Great Babylon, that strong city! God is punishing the people who live there so quickly!" ¹¹And the merchants of the earth will mourn greatly for the city because no one living there will ever again buy the things that they have to sell. ¹²⁻¹³They sell ornaments made of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. They sell expensive cloth made of fine linen and silk, expensive cloth that is dyed purple and crimson. They sell many kinds of scented wood and many kinds of items made of ivory, the most expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble. They sell cinnamon, spices, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, and grain. They sell cattle, sheep, horses, and chariots. They even sell human beings as slaves. ¹⁴Yes, the good things the people of Babylon longed to have are gone! God has punished them by destroying their many valuable possessions! They have lost those possessions permanently. ¹⁵Many merchants earned a lot of money by selling these things. Those merchants will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that God will punish them too if they get too close.. They will mourn greatly ¹⁶and they will say, "Very terrible things have happened to that great city! That city was like a woman who dressed in clothes made of fine linen and expensive cloth dyed purple and crimson and who wore gold jewelry with precious stones and pearls. ¹⁷But God has destroyed all these expensive things so quickly!"

Every ship captain, every ship passenger, all sailors, and all others who do work involving the ocean will stand far away from the city. ¹⁸When they see the smoke of the fire that is burning there, they will shout, "No other city has ever been like that great city!" ¹⁹They will even throw dust on their heads {to show that they are sad,} Then they will shout in great distress, "Very terrible things have happened to Babylon. The people who lived in that city bought many expensive things, so that people who owned ships earned a lot of money by transporting those things there. God has destroyed that city so quickly!"

²⁰Then someone spoke from heaven saying, "You who live in heaven, rejoice over what has happened to Babylon! You who are God's people, including you apostles and prophets, rejoice because God has justly punished the people of that city because they harmed you so badly!"

²¹Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large stone for grinding grain and he threw it into the ocean. Then he said, "God will destroy the great city of Babylon abruptly! It will disappear completely, just as that stone disappeared into the ocean! Babylon will be gone forever! ²²In that city there will never again be anyone playing harps, singing, playing flutes, or blowing trumpets. There will no longer be any skilled workers making things. There will never again be people grinding grain at the mills. ²³No lamp will ever again shine there. There will never again be the happy voices of any bridegroom and his bride. God will destroy this city because its merchants were the most important people in the world. They were so prosperous because it was as if the city used witchcraft to get every people group to live as its people did. ²⁴The city is also guilty of killing the prophets and others of God's people. Indeed, {because it used violence and set an example of violence,} it is guilty of every murder that people committed on the earth!"

Chapter 19

¹Next I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They were shouting,

"Hallelujah! God has saved us!

Our God is glorious and mighty!

²Praise him because he judges completely fairly!

He has punished the evil city that was like a prostitute, because the people of that city persuaded many other people to act immorally as they did.

Praise him because he has punished them for murdering his servants!"

³The crowd shouted again, saying,

"Hallelujah! The smoke of the fire that is burning that city will go up forever!"

⁴Then the 24 elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said:

"It is true! Hallelujah!"

⁵Then someone spoke from the throne and said,

"All of you who are his servants, praise our God!

All of you who honor him, praise him, every one of you!"

⁶Then I heard something like the noise of a huge crowd of people. They were making a loud sound like the sound of a huge waterfall or loud claps of thunder. They were shouting,

"Hallelujah! Our Lord God, who rules over everything, reigns!

⁷We should truly celebrate, and we should honor him

because now is the time for the Lamb to be united with the woman he is marrying. She has dressed for the wedding.

⁸God has given her clean white clothes to wear. They are fine-linen clothes."

(That fabric represents the right things that God's people do.)

⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write how fortunate the people are whom God invites to the feast when the Lamb marries his wife!" He also said to me, "God has said this, and it is true!" ¹⁰Immediately I prostrated myself in front of the angel to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just your fellow servant and the fellow servant of other believers who speak the truth about Jesus. God has sent me here to serve you by helping you understand the prophetic vision he has given you because you want to speak the truth about Jesus. God is the one you should worship!"

¹¹Then I saw the heavens open up, and I saw something amazing: Jesus riding on a white horse! Those who truly know Jesus call him Always Trustworthy. He judges all people according to what is right, and he fights against people who do what is wrong. ¹²Now his eyes shone like a burning flame. He wore many royal crowns on his head. There was a name on his clothing. Only he knows what that name means. ¹³Blood covered the cloak that he was wearing. Another of his names is the Word of God. ¹⁴The heavenly armies were following him. They were riding on white horses. They were wearing clean, white linen clothes. ¹⁵Jesus had a sharp sword extending from his mouth. He will use it to defeat the rebellious people groups. He himself will rule them so powerfully that no one will be able to resist him. He will destroy his enemies as if they were grapes that he was crushing in a winepress. He will do this for God, who rules over everything and will punish his enemies thoroughly because of their sins. ¹⁶A title appeared on his cloak at his thigh: "This is the King who rules over all other kings and the Lord who rules over all other lords."

¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the light of the sun. He called loudly to all the flesh-eating birds flying high in the sky, "Come and gather for the large feast that God is providing for you!" ¹⁸Come and eat the flesh of God's enemies who will die in this battle! Eat the flesh of kings, of army commanders, of people who fought powerfully, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of many other kinds of people." ¹⁹Then I saw the beast and the kings of earth with their armies. They had gathered together to fight against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰But the rider on the white horse captured the beast and the false prophet. The false prophet is the one who had performed miracles in the beast's presence. By doing that he had deceived the people who had accepted the beast's mark on their foreheads and who had worshiped its image. Then God threw the beast and the false prophet alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹And the rider on the horse killed the rest of their armies with his sword, the one that extended from his mouth. Birds came and ate as much as they wanted of the flesh of the people and horses that he had killed.

Chapter 20

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the deep, dark pit and he was carrying a large chain in his hand. ²The angel seized the dragon. That dragon is the ancient serpent—the devil, that is, Satan. The angel bound him with the chain. That chain would hold him for a thousand years. ³The angel threw him into the deep, dark pit. He shut the door of the pit, locked it, and sealed it to prevent anyone from opening it. He did this so that Satan would no longer deceive the many people groups until after those thousand years. At that time, God will release Satan for a short time.

⁴Then I saw thrones on which people were sitting. God made those people judges. I also saw the souls of other people whose enemies had killed them by cutting their heads off. Their enemies did that because they had spoken the truth from God about Jesus. I also saw the souls of other people whose enemies had not killed them but who had refused to worship the beast or its image. They had not allowed the beast's servants to put the beast's mark on them, either on their foreheads or on their hands. They all became alive again and they ruled with the Messiah during those thousand years. ⁵These were the people who lived again the first time that God caused dead people to live again. The rest of the people who had died did not live again until after those thousand years. ⁶God will be pleased with those who live again this first time. Yes, God will consider them to belong to him in a special way. They will not die a second time. Instead, they will be priests who serve God and the Messiah. They will rule with the Messiah during those thousand years.

⁷At the end of the thousand years, God will release Satan from the deep, dark pit. ⁸Satan will go out to deceive the rebellious people groups all over the earth. {These are the nations that the prophet Ezekiel called} Gog and Magog. Satan will gather them to fight against God's people. There will be so many of them fighting against God's people that no one will be able to count them, just as no one can count the grains of sand on the ocean shore. ⁹They will march from many places on the earth. They will surround the army of God's people where it is in battle formation. That will be at Jerusalem, the city that God loves. But God will send fire down from heaven and it will burn up all of his enemies. ¹⁰Then God will throw the devil, who had deceived those people, into the lake of burning sulfur. This is also where God had thrown the beast and the false prophet. As a result, they will continually suffer severely forever.

¹¹Then I saw a huge white throne on which God was sitting. {He was so fearsome that} the land and the sky disappeared completely when he appeared. ¹²Then I saw people of all kinds who had died but who were now alive again standing in front of God's throne. God opened the books in which he records what people do. God also opened another book, the Book of Life. God writes in that book the names of people who have eternal life. God judged the people who had died and who were now alive again according to what they had done, which he had recorded in the books. ¹³The people whose bodies were in the sea became alive again, and the people whose bodies were in graves on the land also became alive again. {They all stood in front of God's throne, and} God judged each of them according to what each one had done. ¹⁴Then God took the place where souls went after dying physically and threw that place itself into the burning lake. The burning lake is where people go when they die spiritually. ¹⁵Then God saw whose names he had written in the book that lists the people who have eternal life. If someone's name was not in that book, God threw him into the burning lake.

Chapter 21

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the oceans no longer existed. ²I saw the city of Jerusalem, which is special to God, in a new form. It was coming down to earth from God in heaven. The city looked very beautiful, like a bride on her wedding day. ³Then I heard a loud voice calling out from the throne of God. The voice said, "Listen to this! Now God will live right where people live! They will belong to him, and God himself will stay with them. ⁴He will comfort them so that they are no longer sad. None of them will ever again die or mourn or cry or suffer pain. God has taken away those things, so they are gone forever."

⁵Then God said from the throne, "Listen to this! I am now making everything new!" He also said to me, "Write these things that I have told you. You can be confident that I will certainly cause them to happen." ⁶He also said to me, "I have completed all these things! I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. To everyone who wants it, I will freely give everlasting life, as if I were giving them a drink from a spring whose water keeps people alive. ⁷I will give this to all who are victorious over Satan. And I will be their God, and they will be my children. ⁸But all the others will suffer in the lake of burning sulfur. That is what it means to die a second time. Those who are cowards will suffer this way. So will those who do not believe in me, those who do detestable things, those who murder people, those who sin sexually, those who practice witchcraft, those who worship idols, and all those who tell lies."

⁹Then an angel came to me. He was one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of the wine that caused the seven last ways of suffering. He said to me, "Come with me. I will show you the people who will live together with the Lamb forever!"

¹⁰Then the Holy Spirit inspired me so that I could see and hear things in a vision. The angel took me to the top of a very high mountain. There he showed me the city that is special to God, the new Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹The city was shining with brilliant light that came from God himself. It was sparkling like a priceless jasper gemstone, and it was clear like crystal. ¹²A very high wall surrounded the city. The wall had twelve gates. An angel stood at each gate. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel appeared over the gates. Each gate had the name of one tribe. ¹³Three gates were on the east side of the city. Three gates were on the north side. Three gates were on the south side. And three gates were on the west side. ¹⁴The city wall had twelve foundation stones. On each foundation stone was the name of one of the twelve apostles whom the Lamb had appointed.

¹⁵The angel who was speaking to me carried a golden measuring rod. He used it to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶The city was square in shape, that is, it was as long as it was wide. After the angel measured the city with his rod, he reported that it was 2, 200 kilometers long and that its width and height were the same as its length.

¹⁷He measured its wall and reported that it was 66 meters high. The angel used the measurement that people normally use.

¹⁸The stones of the city wall were like the green stone that people call jasper. The buildings of the city were pure gold and they showed reflections the way clear glass does. ¹⁹The foundations of the city wall were beautiful precious stones. Each foundation was a different stone. The first foundation stone was jasper. The second foundation stone was sapphire. The third foundation stone was chalcedony. The fourth foundation stone was emerald. ²⁰The fifth foundation stone was sardonyx. The sixth foundation stone was carnelian. The seventh foundation stone was chrysolite. The eighth foundation stone was beryl. The ninth foundation stone was topaz. The tenth foundation stone was chrysoprase. The eleventh foundation stone was jacinth. And the twelfth foundation stone was amethyst. ²¹The twelve gates of the city were each huge pearls. Each gate was a single pearl. The city streets were pure gold and they showed reflections the way clear glass does.

²²There was no temple in the city. That was because the Lord God himself, who rules over all, and the Lamb were there. So there was no need for a temple. ²³Now the city will not need the sun or the moon for light, because the light coming from God and from the Lamb will be all the light that it needs. ²⁴The way people live in the city will be

an example to all of the world's people groups. The rulers of the earth will bring their treasures into the city to honor God and the lamb. ²⁵It will never be night in the city. So no one will ever shut the gates of the city as one usually does at the end of a day. ²⁶The people of the world will also bring their wealth into the city. ²⁷But nothing that is morally impure will ever enter that city. No one who does things that God considers detestable and no one who tells lies will ever enter it. Only those people whose names God has written in the book that belongs to the Lamb will be there. That is the book that lists the names of people who have everlasting life.

Chapter 22

¹Then the angel showed me the river that causes people who drink from it to live forever. The water was sparkling and clear like crystal. The river was flowing out from the thrones where God and the Lamb were sitting. ²It flowed down through the middle of the city's open area. On each side of the river was a tree with fruit that causes people who eat it to live forever. These trees produce fruit 12 times a year. They produce a crop each month. The people groups use the leaves of the trees as medicine. ³There will never be anyone or anything there that God will curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will worship him there. ⁴They will see him face to face, and his name will appear on their foreheads. ⁵There will never again be night. God's servants will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God will shine his light upon them. They will rule forever.

⁶The angel said to me: "These things that God has shown you are true, and he will certainly make them happen. The Lord God who inspires the prophets sent his angel to show the people who serve him the events that must happen soon." ⁷Jesus says to all his people, "Listen to this! I am coming soon; God will abundantly bless everyone who obeys the prophetic message in this book."

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw in a vision these things that I have written down. When I had heard and seen them, I immediately lay down in front of the angel who had shown me these things in order to worship him.

⁹But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just a servant of God like you! I am also a servant like your fellow believers who are the prophets, and like those who obey the message in this book. Instead, worship God!" ¹⁰He also said to me, "Do not keep secret the message about what God has foretold in this book, because it is almost time for him to fulfill this message. ¹¹Since that time is near, if those who act in an evil manner want to continue to act that way, let them continue to do so. If those who are vile want to continue to be vile, let them continue to do so. God will soon punish them for that. But those who are acting righteously should continue to act righteously. Those who are acting as people should who belong to God should continue to act that way."

¹²Jesus says to all people: "Listen! I am coming soon! And I will punish or reward everyone according to what each one has done. ¹³I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. I am before all things and I am at the end of all things. ¹⁴God is very pleased with the people who stop living in wrong ways and start living in right ways. Because they do that, those people will be able to eat the fruit of the tree that enables people to live forever. They will be able to go through the gates into the holy city. ¹⁵But others will not enter that city. This includes people who do wicked things, practice witchcraft, sin sexually, murder others, worship idols, or lie continually.

¹⁶I, Jesus, sent my angel to announce these things that will affect you groups of believers. Mysteriously, I am both the ancestor of King David and his descendant whom the prophets promised would come. I am the one who is like the bright morning star."

¹⁷The Holy Spirit and the people who belong to God say, "Come!" Whoever hears this should also say, "Come!" Everyone who wants everlasting life should receive it! God will give everlasting life as a free gift to everyone who desires it!

¹⁸I, John, solemnly warn everyone who hears the message about what I have foretold in this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will punish him in the ways that this book tells about. ¹⁹And if anyone takes away any of the message about the things I have foretold in this book, God will take away that person's right to eat fruit

from the tree that enables people to live forever. God will also take away that person's right to enter the new Jerusalem. I describe both these things in this book.

²⁰Jesus, who says that all these things are true, says, "Certainly I am coming soon!" I, John, reply, "May it be so! Lord Jesus, come!"

²¹I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly to all of you who are God's people. May it be so!

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